

## Plant Exchange

## Family Summer On The Rock

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](mailto: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

Backyard began as a vegetable garden of former owners. A redwood deck outgrew its lifespan. Now the backyard features multi-use outdoor living spaces. Their yard with three-tiered patios was a stop on Missouri Valley Master Gardeners' garden tour last summer.

## LANDSCAPE PLAN FOR BETTER RESULTS

Hard work to replace a redwood deck became a cherished family memory for Tim and Rita Butler of Yankton and their daughters Alyssa, Justine, and Kelsey.

Unlike many do-it-yourselfers, they started with a plan, courtesy of Alyssa who is completing her degree in landscape architecture at Kansas State University. Now when they exit their second floor kitchen into the backyard, they walk out onto a landing leading down to tiered multi-use patios of landscape blocks and pavers below. Plan included annual plant suggestions for deep well planters, container plants, and shrub and perennial suggestions around the lower patios.

"We felt more confident that our ground work was right with a plan," Tim said. He is Director of Operations at Vishay Dale Electronics. "I can't just walk out and start doing things."

"You saw the whole picture [with 3D computer graphics and] items we chose for the plan. That was important to me not being a visual person," Rita said. She is a case manager at the Yankton Federal Prison Camp.

## 1) Figure Out What You Want.

"We wanted a place to eat outside, fire pit that we may scale up [later], place to sit around, and space to tailgate," he said.

"We have the outer walls to sit on," she said.

"We wanted overflow space without so many chairs," he said. We didn't want a lot of rails, so [patio boundaries] act as both rail and seating. And it gives a little privacy with the alley behind the yard."

"Functionally, we didn't want stairs [from the second floor down to the yard]," he continued. That's why they have patios at different levels down to the ground. "Planters are on a drip system. We put a plastic storage building under the landing for off season snow blowers or lawn mowers, grill, games there." Storage unit appears as if built in.

"We don't have enough garages," Rita laughed.

Wall near the storage area shows design finesse. "We didn't want a five foot tall wall of block here," he said. "So Alyssa designed a curved seat with the wall as an accent and for function."

"Hardest decision in the whole thing was light fixtures," Tim said. Pillars with lights are on tiered patios. "We didn't want light to be too bright and to match what was on the house. So the light is dimmable when people are here and otherwise is a security light."

To design the plan, Alyssa wanted to know that the full sun backyard with east facing deck was shaded after 5:00PM. She needed lots of pictures of the house and yard and she asked for measurements. She wanted to know tree placements, intended uses for the areas, problems they knew about, and other wishes.

"I drew up something and gave it to Alyssa," he said. "It was quite geometric. She turned it into something appealing. She softened it up."

Rita attributes the features of pillars, planters, and curves widely used in the design to Alyssa.

## 2) Get Moving.

Summer drought of 2012 is where more family got involved. "There was a lot of sweat equity by the family," Tim said. "We took last summer from the first of May to the end of September [for this project]. We didn't do anything else."

"We were a lot thinner at the end of the summer," Rita said. "We got adjusted to the work. We had jugs of ice water around. Alyssa came home a few weekends. But Justine was home from summer school at University of Houston School of Optometry and did the



PHOTO: BRENDA K. JOHNSON

Family of Tim and Rita Butler spent four months completing their outdoor living area. Shown are two of the three tiers with planters, containers, flowerbeds, and multi-use areas.

brunt of work, and Kelsey worked too."

"Justine's last summer home was spent on the rock," Tim laughed.

"We both have full time jobs too so we did the work in the wee hours of the night—many nights until midnight with the lights on."

"I have to work a weekend day at my job," Rita said. "That's when I enjoyed working weekends."

"We didn't want someone to do this for us. It would have been at least double the cost," he said. But they learned a lot.

"We had to measure and sort all the landscape block into five grades before we used it because of the different thicknesses. It may have doubled the effort. Of course ones who do this for a living know this stuff," he said.

"Kelsey measured all these blocks," Rita said. "They had piles all around and would ask for a size." Because of the variations in blocks, piles saved them time.

"Kelsey just graduated from Yankton High School and is at South Dakota State University in mathematics," he said.

"Justine helped take apart wood boards and plane them," he said. "She learned she wants to stay in school in Houston in the summer."

Do-it-yourselfers worry about success in their techniques. "This spring, with a half hour of power washing, the patios were ready for use. It was a lot of work but this is less maintenance, than the deck," Tim said. Pavers and landscape blocks had been set in a gravel base without foundation, so they were relieved that their work remained level after the freeze / thaw cycle.

"We found independent contractors such as Larry Loeffler who is our sprinkler guy and he gives me advice. Randy Hlavac helped move the soil in and out and backfill," he said.

"We found out that curves help keep the [landscape block] wall straight," he said. "Curves distribute the pressure. One winter down." Blocks were glued with concrete adhesive. Pavers are set in place and can be removed if needed.

"[Tim and our daughters] figured out a decorative mat design here," Rita said. The first step before the patio has varied shapes like an inset mat." They used lots of math and measurements.

"This is where Kelsey excelled," she said. "She laid the blocks out in a pattern."

## 3) Find Right Plants.

"Alyssa and Rita know what colors go together," Tim said. "I'm color blind."

Alyssa had researched perennial and annual plants for the USDA plant zone, for sun or shade locations in the yard, space needed per plant, and colors they liked. They wanted something in bloom in succession during the season in the planters, containers, and foundation plantings, with secondary colors of lime green and burgundy brown. Plants on the patios complemented perennials by the detached garage that she had suggested earlier.

"Colors change throughout the summer," he said. Black-eyed Susans are prominent now. Planters have ornamental millet at each level of the patios. Moving ornamental grasses soften the stone. "Where I work at Vishay, Alyssa designed the front area by the flagpoles. She used natural grasses there too."

Bright colors on the patios are red and white. "Plants were from graduation," Rita said. Sisters were home to enjoy the outdoor space along with Kelsey and they had open house on the patio." Kelsey kept close eye on the weather before the event.

## 4) Learn Some Lessons.

"If you want something nice you have to put in the effort," Tim said. "We'll remember the late hours, sweat, and toil of all of us."

"Find a professional that you have seen their work to give you advice or a blueprint. You'll have the confidence to go on with the work. The blueprint is yours for life," he said. "You can say, this year, we can do that one part," Rita said.

"We grew up on farms so we've worked hard. This was the most labor-intensive project that I think our daughters ever did," she said.

"When they get their own homes, they're going to know they can do this," he said. "It's one thing to help for an hour. It's another to sign up for the summer."

"We all took pride in this. It wasn't something only Dad built," Rita said.

"Being together, eating pizzas around the tree ring, people seeing us working in the middle of the night with the lights on," Tim said. "we did something as a family."

## The September Yard Of The Month

Homeowners at 407 East 19th Street are our Yard of the Month.

Tom and Julie Stotz have created instant curb appeal using a multi-level plant stand (tree stump) filled with a variety of annual flowering pots. A pleasant walk from the street to the front entry as you notice a stand of tiger lilies holding court over a manicured lawn. Julie has gathered items of interest for an eye-pleasing entry. Julie has recently inherited specimen from other family gardeners — mom, grandma, aunts ... she is incorporating these plants in her established beds for an inter-generational memory garden.

In the backyard Tom has built a raised privacy fence to accommodate the raised bed of perennials. Using several buckthorn as a back drop for the perennial bed offers the viewer another multi-level visual of green with subdued color.

Both Tom and Julie enjoy the serene tranquility of their private oasis.

## October Plant Tips

Arnold Stelling is Lawn and Garden Manager at Kopet-sky's Ace Hardware, 2404 Broadway Ave. in Yankton. Thanks to Stelling for his fall tree, perennial, and lawn care tips.

- Deep-water trees and shrubs before the ground freezes using root feeders.
- Fertilize trees and shrubs with tree spikes or root feeder tablets.
- Deep water perennial plants in late fall with root feeder or slow running garden hose, or a drip line system.
- Get a head start on spring by dethatching lawn in late fall. Clear lawn of leaves and branches, as this is where insects and disease overwinter until spring.
- Fertilize lawn with a winterizing fertilizer, and give your lawn a good deep watering before winter sets in.

## Native Plants Of The Region: Cattails

Mature brown female seed head on a spike is a common identifier of cat-tails that are found around ponds or other wet areas such as along Highway 52 west of Yankton along river bottomland. Historic Dakota Indians called cattails "the bottom of a tipi". They wove mats for the tipi from long cattail grass-like leaves and their name resulted.

Joe Delvaux talked about cultural uses of plants as a weekly topic for Missouri National Recreational River this summer. He is a seasonal ranger for the National Park Service and Vermillion High School history teacher.

Delvaux showed the down from cattails that he had collected locally. He said that early Pawnee of the Missouri River region called them "eye-itch" from flying down.

Historic Omaha-Ponca Indians called them "corn" because cattails matured about the same time as garden corn. Down from cat-tails was used for dressing burns, filling for pillows, padding, and baby wraps, as diaper absorbing material.

Male flowers with pollen form on the spike above female cattail flowers. Female flower seed form the brown rod shape that is characteristic of cattails. Seeds are attached to down for wind dispersal.

Delvaux picked samples such as cattails because they are recognizable and important to the region. One of his sources is Uses of Plant by the Indians of the Missouri River Region by Melvin R. Gilmore. He said that ranger programs on Missouri River topics may be requested for area classrooms at Missouri National Recreational River: (605) 605.665.0209

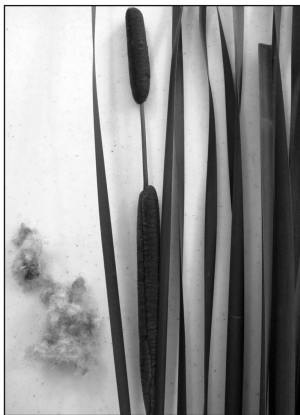


PHOTO: BRENDA K. JOHNSON

Mature female seeds remain on the flower spike of cattails. Earlier male pollen flowers were on the spike above female flowers. Joe Delvaux, seasonal ranger for the National Park Service collected local samples for in his Missouri National Recreational River talk on "Cultural Medicinal and Edible Plants of the Prairie" this summer.

## Gardener To Gardener

Evelyn Schindler of Yankton has gardened for many years. Thanks for sharing gardening tips.

- I don't have house plants. I may have houseplants but that is not why I buy them. All my plants go outdoors in summer. In winter, I bring some indoors to overwinter. I look for many houseplants in winter that I can use in pots in summer. I keep them indoors until after the last frost and then combine them with other plants for outdoor containers.

- I like foliage rather than flowers for shade containers. I prefer hues of green and chartreuse, white, black, and variegated plants. Dracaena and variegated Wandering Jew are a favorite. I like variegated plants,

but in a container garden you can't put variegated plants together. Too busy.

- A mature lilac in the corner of the backyard was an eyesore. I trim it high so that foliage is near the top. You can see the trunks and air through leafless limbs Containers at the base of the lilac add structure at the base of the grouping and focal point.

- I overwinter cuttings of passion vines and then let them grow near spring so they get a head start in summer. Large rebar hoops are trellises for the vines across my backyard. I tie the plants up with natural twine. I leave the old passion vines from past years on the hoops so it covers the trellis. I leave the hoops up year round.

- Tree roots near the surface in the yard prevents you from digging in the soil. If you put in a mounded berm of soil, you can plant in it.



PHOTO: BRENDA K. JOHNSON

Philodendron houseplant for others makes an outdoor plant for Evelyn Schindler. A birdbath pedestal and paver becomes the stage for the container.

GOT NEWS?

Call The Press &amp; Dakotan At 665-7811



Your home is his castle...  
But It Doesn't Have To Smell That Way!

Carpet Cleaning Special **\$75.95**  
for any 2 rooms (up to 300 sq. ft.)

Steamway  
CLEANING & RESTORATION  
Since "1968"

665-5700  
1-800-529-2450

Not good with any other offer.  
Must present coupon.  
Expires 11/15/13

## 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?

- Find some new ideas from a local vegetable gardener.
- How does a horticulturist make a place stand out with regional and historically cultural plants?
- What are tips from area gardeners to make gardening easier, attract birds, enjoy beneficial bugs, and build trellises for flowers?
- Want to see what's blooming here and in Ireland or Australia? See "Garden Bloggers Bloom Day" October 15th link four days from now.

Check our blog at: [www.brendakjohnsonplantexchange.wordpress.com](http://www.brendakjohnsonplantexchange.wordpress.com)

## Medicare knowledge that works for you.

The Blues® have been helping people with Medicare since the program began. We can help you review your options and choose a Medicare supplement plan that's right for you. Call today!



Linda Behl

## Cihak Insurance

311 Walnut, Yankton, SD  
665-9393

AUTHORIZED  
INDEPENDENT  
AGENTS FOR

Wellmark  
South Dakota

This is a solicitation of insurance. Wellmark Medicare supplement insurance plans are not affiliated with any government agency. To be eligible, you must reside in the service area of the plan. Wellmark Blue Cross and Blue Shield of South Dakota is an independent Licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.

23P023-2013-SD