

PLANT EXCHANGE

Renewing With Lawn Art And Color

BY BRENDA K JOHNSON
P&D Correspondent

Forces of Nature so prominent this season make the pause to experience beauty dear. With each visit to their yard, something looks new. Maybe it's the next dominant plant or change in color in the succession of the growing season. Maybe plant containers have been re-grouped. Maybe it's the new site chosen for an ornament. Often the elements for beauty are there all along, ready for the skillful gardener, such as in this yard.



BRENDA K. JOHNSON
Judy Utley of Yankton has re-worked most of her yard in the eleven years she has lived here. Only mature lilac shrubs remain from the original yard.

Q: How do you draw focus with lawn art and color?

A: Judy and Bill Utley have lived in Yankton at their current residence for eleven years. Their backyard appears more spacious than its average size by its arrangement. There is so much to see. Judy has shared her yard with many, in fact, six public garden tours, including Keep Yankton Beautiful, her Town & Country Garden Club, church group, past sorority sisters, and most recently, her Missouri Valley Master Gardeners.

"To host a yard," Judy said, "I get everything done that usually takes all summer. How beautiful a garden is; it's meant to share."

Her east-facing back yard has areas of full sun, part sun, and shade. Virginia creeper on their perimeter chain link fence displays summer green and fall red. About half the yard is set aside for raised vegetable beds that Judy plants early season with row cover protection. Vegetables are easy to pick without bending over, and covers, which she removes later in the season, deter some pests. A wooden arbor entrance to the vegetable area also separates the raised beds from the rest of the yard.

"Watering is a lot of work on hot days," Judy said. The raised beds have soaker hoses coiled beneath plants. "Now hoses connect to our sprinkler system. I turn the valve on indoors, instead of working with them out here."

Judy says she enjoys "digging in



BRENDA K. JOHNSON
Wooden arbor and near antique gate welcomes the visitor into the raised bed garden area. "New hinges and hooks for this and other gates came from Rivercity Sandblasting," Utley said.

the dirt." Bill has some physical limitations due to Multiple Sclerosis, but they both enjoy the view of their backyard from their four-season room. "I tell Bill I have a present for him, but it's really another lawn ornament for the yard."



BRENDA K. JOHNSON
Judy has re-painted several statues around the yard with a water-based spray gold paint and rubbed highlights of complementary color.

ART AND BLOOM

"I really didn't garden before moving here. Now my sister also gardens and we share plants." Judy looks at a near out-of-zone plant from her sister that she is trial-growing.

Nearby a mature lilac shrub canopies a deep blue sphere on a pedestal and an angel statue surrounded by hostas. "My mom bought this gazing ball in 2000 before she passed away and my dad thought Mom would have wanted me to have it. It's outside most of the season, but I take the sphere inside if there is the slightest chance of hail."

She indicates how she cares for several ornamental pieces. "In the spring, I use soap and water or a spray hose to clean off the art before displaying them."

"I like to cluster plants and art together (in confined space) so the whole yard doesn't look busy. I try for balance among the clusters so the eye moves from one spot to the next."

She has renewed the plaster angel along with other statues in her yard.



BRENDA K. JOHNSON
Metal lawn art and repeating color are clustered in this spot in the yard.

"I spray water-based gold exterior paint on the statue and then highlight folds and other parts with dark tones of paint (applied with a cloth. I keep a wet cloth nearby to remove unwanted paint."

"Some of the metal art came from LilyCrest Cottage here in Yankton and other came from Diane's Greenhouse in Fordyce, Nebraska." She planted red impatiens of the same tone as red metal flowers mounted on the fence. Virginia creeper along the fence will soon add its fall color. "I like to match plants with objects. Red is a favorite."

Among the greens of leaf texture perennials glistens another gazing ball on a stand. "You paint an old bowling ball a background color and then apply these colored glass stones with glue."

Her collection of wooden bird-

houses is hung among branches of lilac shrubs and with entrance arbors. "Nothing is prettier than seeing a cardinal in the backyard in winter."

"You have to go with what you love. Ten years ago, I would have picked everything rustic. Now I'm into brilliant color." A lime 50's era two-seat glider has red flowers as blooming accents. "Rivercity Sandblasting in Yankton sandblasted this glider and then painted it with auto paint. They also did the chairs and patio table."



BRENDA K. JOHNSON
Re-purposed bowling ball becomes a lawn art focal point with glass stones.

OUTDOOR ROOM WITH A VIEW

When the Utleys enclosed their deck for a four-season room, they no longer had outdoor table seating. Red, orange, blue, red and yellow chairs surround a red umbrella patio table.

"The patio base of pavers and river rocks was installed by a good family friend of ours."

In full view of their yard, the backdrop for the seating area includes a mature variegated red twig dogwood, 'Diablo' ninebark, and weigela, all branching in natural habit. "I try to keep shrubs and perennials in their natural shape, the way they are supposed to look, unless one is damaging another plant," Judy said.

Nearby is 'Orange Burst' scented geranium, rose scented geranium, pineapple sage, oregano and spearmint. For more color, a mandevilla vine grows in a wrought iron birdcage and a container of purple fountain grass plays in late day air.

"I only have one more project to do," Judy said. She motioned to the perennial bed and could see a bench and some stepping-stones. "If plants don't fit in one spot, just move them somewhere else. This work is very relaxing, digging in the dirt, growing your own vegetables. The beauty of it brings you a little closer to Heaven."

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

September Plant Tips

A VISIT WITH JOE HOFFMAN

Joe Hoffman, Horticulturist for Yankton Federal Prison Camp, offers tips for fall home lawn care. Kentucky bluegrass, perennial rye, or blend mixtures of the two are examples of high maintenance grasses, according to Hoffman, while buffalo grass is a low maintenance example.

"Until about Sept. 15 this a good time for fall lawn seeding. This is when grass is naturally seeding," Hoffman said. "Common reasons that new lawns fail include leaving seeds on top of the ground instead of raking them in, or insufficient watering. Water thoroughly and daily until established. Other reasons for new lawn failure are not sowing enough or bad seeds, or not choosing a shade tolerant grass, such as fescue, for shade areas."

• If thatch is a problem, turf should be power-raked by Sept. 15 to do least damage to healthy turf.

• As temperature drops and rains increase, mowing heights should be shortened from highest setting of 2 1/2 - 3 inches to 2 inches. Turf performs better without tree leaves and long grass blades left on it for the winter.

• Mid September is the best time to control broadleaf biennial and perennial weeds.

• Water when rain is less than one inch per week. Don't let lawn go dormant this month or get too dry.

• New and old lawns respond favorably to cool weather, and a heavy application of high nitrogen fertilizer, no later than Sept. 15. (If your fertilizing program started early (this spring) and the fall is long, then a late application of a winterizer-type fertilizer may be applied in mid-October. This should be relatively low in nitrogen, such as 10-22-16.)

A VISIT WITH DIANE DICKES

Diane Dickes of Diane's Greenhouse, Fordyce, Nebraska (402) 357-3754 is known for her designed plant containers. "It's a great time of year for a new fall planter. We have fall mum colors of orange, yellow, white, plum, purple and red, and gourds when they are harvested," Dickes said. Enjoy her tips for making yours:

• If you use a wire basket, wrap the inside with burlap. Use a couple of layers.

• Pick a mum of your choice for the center plant.

• Use some grapevine to wrap around your container and fasten with a zip tie.

• If you can get your hands on bittersweet, wrap the basket with bittersweet. The orange is a great fall color.

• Next you can add small gourds to your basket for more color and interest. Poke wire through the gourd and fasten to the basket. Add as many as you like.

• This planter will be easy to take care of. Just keep the container moist.



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A fall container at Yankton Nurseries with colors of dark red and green in mustard yellow pottery that should last until frost has variegated blood grass and 'Mojo' vinca vine.

Plant Tips: A Discussion On Growing Melons

Q: What watermelons does a nurseryman plant in his home garden?

A: Jay Gurney of Yankton Nurseries has gardened since he was 10 years old. Like many gardeners, he is trying new melons for taste, size, and fit in the region's growing conditions.

"You only have one shot a year," Gurney said. This season he grew a yellow flesh seedless, 'Summer Sweet' # 3521Y, which is a triploid hybrid. Seedless watermelon hybrids have sterile pollen, so varieties with viable pollen must be planted along with the seedless variety.

He planted a seeded red flesh pollinator called 'Sugar Baby.' "It's a standard of small watermelons," Gurney said, indicating that the pollinator was also a table melon.

"This yellow seedless watermelon ripens about two weeks ahead of the red melon. When I plant, I alternate hills for pollination. The yellow seedless has a hull that is light green and striped. The pollinator has a dark green hull. That way I can easily tell them apart in the field."

In June he planted watermelon transplants he had grown in the greenhouse. "I wait until June to plant when the soil is warm. The soil needs to be free of weeds before you start. I didn't irrigate after planting until August this year. The watermelons began ripening about mid August - September.

"I have a hard time telling when they're ripe," Gurney said. "A friend, Larry Olson, tells me that as soon as the first pigtail (tendrill) nearest the watermelon stem dries up, it shows that the fruit is ripened. "Gurney then cut the watermelon off the vine instead of pulling it, possibly damaging the vine. Ready to enjoy.



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This yellow seedless 'Summer Sweet' grew to maturity in mid August with little irrigation.

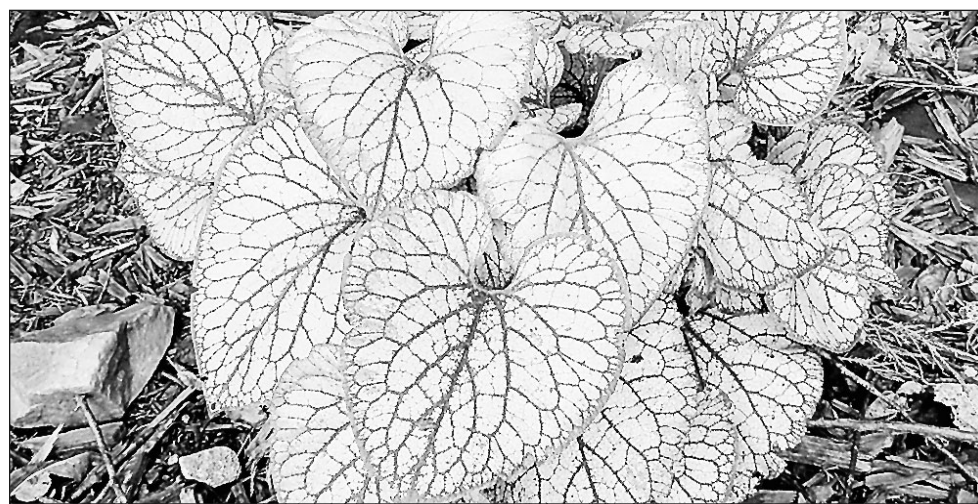
Plants That Deer Or Rabbits Seldom Munch

Gardeners might benefit to know if some plants growing in our region are naturally animal "resistant," at least in your setting. Please contribute name of plant, animal(s) deterred, and your experience to: news@yankton.net Attn: Brenda Johnson or write to P&D, 319 Walnut St., Yankton, SD 57078, Attn: Brenda Johnson.

Diane Tunge, who lives in a lake home west of Yankton, has found deer to be the most challenging of animals to garden around. Deer sample many plants, but some are the least affected are from her gardening experiences this season.

"Here are the deer resistant plants, so far!" Tunge said.

Licorice, Bugle weed, Cat mint, Hybrid sage, Yarrow, Dead nettle, Periwinkle, 'Jack Frost' Brunnera, Lenten Rose (Hellebores), Potentilla



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Deer Resistant Brunnera

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