

Plant Exchange

Coming Up Roses

Local Growers
Enjoy Perennials,
Community Garden

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 Attn: Brenda Johnson or write to P&D, 319 Walnut St., Yankton, SD 57078, Attn: Brenda Johnson.

BY BRENDA K. JOHNSON

P&D Correspondent

LOVE THOSE ROSES

"Beginners luck for me," Debbie Roberts of Yankton said. "I never had roses before." Formerly of Leadville, Colorado, Roberts grew annuals with the short growing season there. But she hasn't had much experience growing perennials before planting a bed of hybrid tea roses here last year.

"I planned on losing a couple but we didn't have a bad winter. They all came back!"

As well as drawing good luck, Roberts increased her odds of success with rose care. At the end of last season she cut back the stems and put soil high around the crowns for protection.

"I used biodegradable caps to cover each rose. My husband Jay put stakes and webbing over the caps to hold them in place in high wind. I find the biodegradable caps are better because the Styrofoam ones don't breathe as well if it gets warm early in spring before you take them off the plants."

"When we planted them last year [and this spring], we dug in mushroom compost that I think helped plants a lot."

"Starting from when I took the caps off in April, monthly I apply Bayer Rose and Flower Care. It's a fertilizer, fungicide, and insecticide. I dig up around the rose bush, sprinkle a capful around the base and scratch it in with a small hand tool and then water. I think it prevented black spot and other disease," she said.

Roberts also adjusted amount and timing of lawn irrigation water for the different needs of roses. Then leaves could dry off in the heat of the day. "My arsenal for aphids and rose caterpillars includes Bonide Dragoon Dust with copper."

"I added Miracle-Gro Bloom Booster a couple of times when roses bloomed," Roberts said.

Planting perennials such as roses or hostas in fall heightened spring anticipation. "When my husband took the caps off the roses I almost turned cartwheels. It was exciting to see perennials come back," Roberts said.

COMMUNITY GARDENER
CONVERSATIONS

Heather and Matt Siebert started gardening at the Healthy Yankton Community Gardens last year in the drought. She is a stay at home mom and he works at University of South Dakota. "We had to water all the time but we had a great garden," Matt said. They used a soaker hose for watering. "We were out here two or three times a week," Heather said. "This year we didn't plant cucumbers because we had two dozen canned pickles left from last year."

"[This year] we grew heirloom tomatoes for the first time," she said.



ABOVE: Debbie Roberts of Yankton attributes beginners' luck to second year growth of her hybrid tea roses. Her skills with other kinds of plants helped too, along with summer weather made for roses. BELOW: Coral Huber of Yankton grows several varieties of heirloom peppers at the community gardens. The round peppers that are just beginning to turn red are Alma Paprika peppers that she will dry and grind to make paprika spice. (Photos By Brenda K. Johnson)



"We were surprised how ugly they look. I just ate one right off the vine. They taste good. This is the first time we've picked them tonight—our first ripe tomatoes." Heirloom tomatoes often begin later than hybrids bred for earlier yield.

"We have five kinds of heirloom tomatoes," Matt said. "We had a bountiful crop of lettuce. A lot of others did too."

"Our daughter Evelyn [here in the baby carrier] was born two weeks ago. So our garden has done without a lot of attention," she said. As we talk, Benjamin, age two, puts garden soil in his bucket with a toy shovel.

"I don't know what's wrong with the onions," he said. "Too much rain? We didn't water. If we had covered the onions with soil it could have helped. Maybe not use the fabric around the onions [because it holds moisture]."

"We have landscape cloth down [between rows of potatoes]. I like how it looks," she said. "Our little boy can walk on it and not get dirty."

"Matt put down soaker hoses between the rows. We didn't use a regular hose for the tomatoes hardly at all. We tried pepper plants but they didn't produce."

"Next year we hope to spend more time at the garden," he said.

"We are very thankful for these community gardens," Heather said. Matt agrees. "We think they are affordable. It gives us the chance to grow quality organic vegetables without having to pay so much. It's a great program that the City of Yankton has for us. We'll do it again next year. We love to be outdoors and get our children outside."

Coral Huber of Yankton is an avid gardener and has two plots at the community gardens.

"It's been a phenomenal cucumber and pepper year," Coral said. "I've never seen peppers grow like this. These are heirlooms. I get them from Seed Savers Exchange." She grows them from seed and transplants them in the garden. Most are for salsa. They have names like Indian Jwala, Bulgarian Carrot, Black Hungarian, and Cy-clone.

"Peppers are easy to grow. Weather didn't cooperate for them last year. Peppers get very few pests or diseases," she said.

An off-white round pepper stands out. "Alma Paprika peppers, when they are red, I stem and seed them, put them in a food dehydrator until they are crispy, and then grind them [like prepared spice paprika]," she said.

"I'm growing ghost peppers, one of the hottest peppers in the world, just shy of pepper spray. They're tiny bundles of hotness now."

Conversation moved to gophers. "If only the gophers would try the hot peppers," she said. "He was here last night while I was picking vegetables. He eats my beets. I got enough to pickle before he got to them." She showed teeth marks on several exposed beets.

"I've canned thirty quarts of pickles. Cucumbers are still producing. Last year with the drought, I put up five. Homemade trellis for cucumber vines to climb is made from concrete reinforcing wire cut into lengths.

The same wire is used for tomatoes. "I had made tomato cages from the lengths, but didn't have enough of them this summer so I split the cages open." With the three opened cages upright, she placed the 'C' shapes back to back with edges out. Within and between each 'C' shape, she placed a tomato plant. Vines climb the reinforcing wire and are held in place with bamboo dowels that she threaded through adjoining cages.

"Pole beans are growing on homemade tomato cages," she said. These tall, sturdy cylinder-shaped cages are also of reinforcing wire and are tall enough for the indeterminate heirloom tomatoes she grows. By growing several vegetables vertically, Coral gets a lot of produce from her two plots at the community gardens.

Coral had peas growing on chicken wire fence earlier in the season. Potatoes are now maturing next to the fence. "I put plants that grow later next to [early plants like peas] so both have room to grow." This is a square foot gardening technique.

She gardens at home as well as the plots here. "I grow all my plants in raised beds without sides." Soil is mounded six inches or so above the walking paths. "You have paths so you're not walking in the rows and compacting the soil," she said.

Another gardener pointed Coral out earlier as an exceptional gardener not to miss. she is a veteran community gardener since the gardens opened four seasons ago.

September
Plant Tips

Jay Gurney, owner and nurseryman of Yankton Nurseries, 2000 Ferdig Ave., (605) 665-6560, shares tips to help make yard and garden work more successful.

• September is a great time to plant trees and shrubs so their roots can become established before soil temperatures lower. If you need to move trees, tree-spading season has started. As evergreens slow growth and deciduous trees lose their leaves, they are ready to be moved.

• Fall is the best time to spray perennial broadleaf weeds such as dandelions and creeping jenny since they are still actively growing and are storing food for winter. Weed killers work their best in fall.

• After the first hard frost and tops have died back, perennials such as peonies, hostas, and daylilies can be dug and divided. Keep an eye on watering plants now so that they enter dormancy moist.

• If you haven't sewn grass seed yet, do it now so roots can establish.

• There's still time to harvest watermelon, cantaloupe, potatoes, squash, beets, and carrots from the garden.

Dibbles
& Bits

• Plant Sale will be held Saturday September 7th at Riverside Park Territorial Capitol Building from 8:00AM - Noon. Missouri Valley Master Gardeners sponsor this 6th annual sale that includes perennials, houseplants, and other items of interest to gardeners. Proceeds from the sale will be used for future projects and community events.

• Try Saving Seed? Non-hybrid seed such as heirloom tomatoes can be saved with a few steps. Mash the ripe tomato and put in container of water and set aside for a few days. Separate seeds from pulp, dry seeds on a screen a day or so until fully dry and store in refrigerator or cool location. More tips at National Gardening Association Midwest Report: www.garden.org/regional/report/current/

• Soil is more than dirt. About half of soil is chipped rocks and minerals of many sizes that trap air and moisture. When weeding, aggregates or bunches of soil cling to roots. Earthworms, pill bugs, and other underground feeders loosen soil as they burrow and eat. Organic matter added to amend soil such as leaves or wood mulch and compost provide microorganisms the food they need to decay or break down organic matter into forms plants can take in. More about soil in the April 2013 Garden Gate magazine at the Yankton Community Library.

Gardener
To Gardener

Share what you find useful for gardening.

Jean Koupal of rural Yankton is an experienced gardener who recently completed master gardener training through South Dakota State University Extension. Thanks to Koupal for sharing her garden wisdom.

• Deter birdseed weeds. Are you tired of pulling weeds that have sprouted from spilled seed under your bird feeder? One easy solution – fill a plastic bowl with birdseed, cover with a paper towel and microwave the seeds for about a minute per each pound, let cool and fill the birdfeeders. Microwaving often softens the seed coat, making it vulnerable to rot in storage so make sure you heat only the seed you are going to use right away!

• Look carefully at garden myths that may have a grain of truth. Myth1: You should only plant perennials in the spring. Truth is September and October are great months to find bargains on perennial plants and plant them. The cooler weather actually reduces transplant shock. So make sure you



plant perennials several weeks before the ground freezes. They do need time to establish new roots before they go dormant for the winter. Myth 2: If a plant is wilting, it needs water. The truth is that we usually grab the watering can the minute we see a droopy plant but on warm days those plants might look wilted. That's because the leaves are losing moisture faster than the plant can take up moisture. When the temperature cools down the plant perks up. If your plant continues to droop, you may need to investigate the roots – rotten roots can inhibit water uptake.

• Clean hummingbird feeders. It is not easy to clean hummingbird feeders but mold may harm birds. First empty the nectar out of the feeder. Add a few drops of bleach cleaning solution: One tablespoon un-

scented bleach to one-quart water to kill the mold. Then add uncooked rice to the feeder, cover and shake. Rice works as an abrasive. Do not use instant rice. Empty rice and rinse the feeder thoroughly.

• Vinegar may kill weeds. A few squirts of vinegar may kill small weeds. Be careful using it around other plants, though, as it may burn foliage or kill unintended plants. If the weed comes back just get your spray bottle out and add another application.

• Why garden? I think one of the reasons people love gardens is that deep love for nature. What makes me go outside for hours each day with my gardening tools? Gardening is definitely a healthy habit – a hobby that provides physical exercise and helps the environment. So no matter the reason for gardening, I think that we all should continue to do so since, in the USA we are dealing with so much obesity and pollution. I think gardening can improve the state of our country. Each morning and evening I take a garden walk to check on my plants. Is this compulsion or just a true love of nature? For me it is relaxing and calming, a great place to meditate and just a quick escape from this busy world.

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?

• See local nursery agave in bloom after 35 years.
• How does a local gardener raise Mason bees to increase fruit tree pollination?
• What were the standout annuals from the drought of 2012?
• How does a local homeowner replace lawn with a cottage garden and personalize her backyard with Pinterest ideas?
• Want to see what's blooming around the United States and elsewhere? Select "Garden Bloggers Bloom Day" August 15th link.
Check our blog at: www.brendakjohnsonplantexchange.wordpress.com

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DEADLINE: NOON, SEPT. 6TH

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