Summer 2020

Can You Dig It?

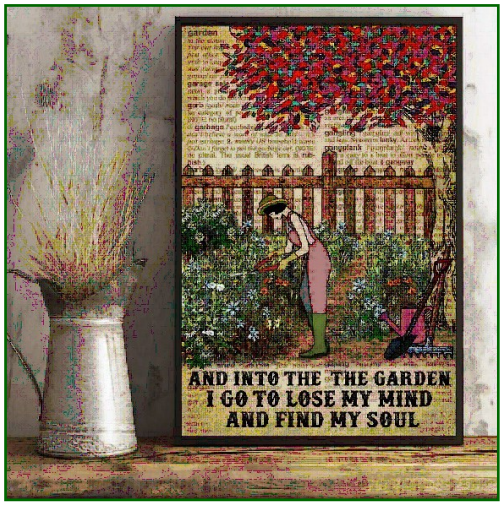
Welcome once again to TCGC's Horticulture Newsletter, the summer of 2020 edition.

As we all continue to struggle with the pandemic and all it has brought to us – quarantine, masks, social distancing, loneliness for some of us – we hope you can find a moment or two to enjoy this issue, staying in touch with our wonderful garden club and perhaps picking up a bit of new information on what we all love – GARDENING!

Our hope for all of you is be well and be safe.

Trish

CYDI Editor



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The "Delights" of Quarantine
❄ Bobbie Brittingham

Sometimes things just don't go the way you plan. I had great plans for this year's spring garden….however, the combination of surgery, a very long cool and wet spring and Covid 19 and its many effects, many of my planned changes either didn't happen or happened not as I planned!

Many of you know that I just love daffodils, tulips, lilies, alliums and I had ordered bulbs and bulbs and bulbs and even more bulbs. Fortunately as the bulbs arrived I was able to get someone to plant them and since I could not be with them to show the areas I wanted the bulbs to be planted they had to rely on my directions as "Just plant them anywhere you can get into the borders. I don't care where the - - - - they go, just get them in the ground."

There were some plants that really needed to be moved to more suitable locations and/or replaced because of the extremely wet two years we had. So many plants, shrubs, and trees simply drown. I mean really dead, died, or otherwise deceased from too much water. I envisioned a glorious spring. Unfortunately my plans would not be fulfilled due to some health issues and all those big and little jobs that were going to make my garden picture book cover ready had to be abandoned.

Another challenge for me – one that I welcomed. I'm always challenging myself to see if those marginal zone plants that I love survived here. Our zone 7 has been divided in two different zones - 7 and 7b. The new zone 7b is slightly warmer that old regular zone 7. So I was anxious to see how they fared.

My plans to hit the garden early and accomplish jobs that had been put off for a few seasons came to a screeching halt….Covid 19 and surgery, not a good combination! Visions of a fabulous spring garden were damped quite a bit by some surgery that kept me off my feet for three months; just then we were quarantined to our homes. The weather was settling down and those wonderful warm clear days with no bugs when I could work for hours and hours teased me unmercifully as I looked out the windows wondering how I would ever catch up on all these long overdue jobs.

The garden just laughed at me as it continued on its merry way, any which way it wanted to wander. I had to be satisfied with watching all the fall planted bulbs come up and bloom in the most peculiar places. I had no control. Many of the marginal plants for zone 7b showed they liked it here. I was very pleased something was going right.

Continuing with my experiences….this was the time of year I made annual excursions to nurseries, garden centers and jaunting around to gather for my garden, deck, patio and vegetable gardens, and pots and planters. With the closing of so many retail stores and the avalanche of orders that web sites experienced, it was hard to find anything I hankered for. I could not walk around the nurseries or stores and always had to rely on a friend to drive me and carry for me.

Time was fleeing by and I just had to buy some plants or have my pots and deck boxes go naked. The limited accessible resources scarcely offered the most mundane choices. I had made one resolution I was determined to keep and that was NOT to have so many pots that have to be watered. Some years I have had over 100 pots of plants to water and then a small nursery area that needs constant watching, too!

Trying to keep my resolution of fewer pots, larger pots, and hardy easy care plants I had problems finding solutions. I had to get creative. I was able to make one stop at a garden center to grab what I could. With face mask on and cart in tow, I charged around trying to find the one-way in entrance which, of course, was at the other end of the store. Maintaining the six foot apart social distancing was really difficult. I would start down an aisle and realize the arrow on the floor was pointing a different direction than I was going. I spun around hoping no one saw what a thoughtless person I was not paying attention to the arrows. Changing direction didn't really help because the aisle I wanted to be on was crowded with other social distancing customers so I went over one aisle and started down that one looking for some plant material and glanced down at the floor. WRONG way. About face and over to the next. But that was shade plants and I needed sun! I had very little time to be picky and finicky and fussy as usual. I randomly snatched some mixed coleus, white petunias, mixed pink and vinca, caladiums, diplidenia, begonias.

I already had a few small items I ordered from an on-line nursery that were meant to be grown for a year or two in

my own nursery. Oh, I forgot about a box of summer bulbs I dug up and stored last fall. Dahlias, gladiolas, cannas, pineapple lilies, a hibiscus that had been thrown in the garage and not even looked at until now when I dragged it out and inspected to see who survived. This virus quarantine had really put the squelch on my plant and floral decorating for the summer living areas.

Not to be deterred and armed with ten 20lb. bags of potting soil, several bags of compost (my own had been used up long ago and the next batch was too young) a new bag of slow release fertilizer, a bucket of shards, gloves and a

Bible (just for added support), I headed out to put my "pot-plan" into action. After assembling the plants that would be neighbors for about five months in the different pots I had to make several adjustments because of personality conflicts. For many reasons it took a few days to make everyone completely happy or at least content with their new home. The pots and border boxes have filled in now and are showing great promise of compatibility.

I did adhere to my resolution of planting larger pots for strategic areas and fewer smaller pots all over the place. Having less time because of the virus to travel around accumulating a variety of material compelled me to be satisfied with what I did have.

Sunflowers Galore!
❄ Pam Keeton

This year I am focusing on growing sunflowers for cutting. From the mammoth sunflowers that produce a lot of seed, to small ones that fit nicely in a vase, sunflowers offer a lot of variety.

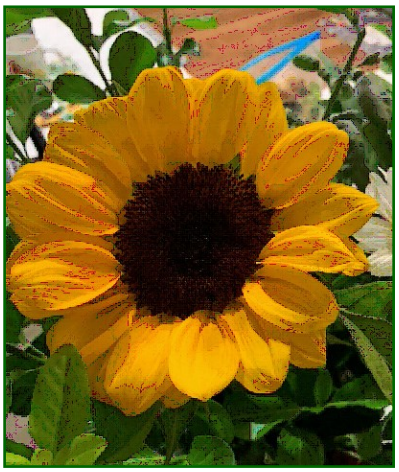
Before selecting my seeds, I looked into colors, attributes and hardiness, and found an amazing number of easy to grow varieties. Here are some basics to consider if you want to grow sunflowers:

- There are single stem varieties that produce one bloom on a sturdy stem. They tend to grow only four feet tall and are preferred by many flower growers and florists alike. The trick to having flowers all summer is to plant a few every two weeks so you have a continuous supply.
- Another basic type of sunflower is multi-branching and produces numerous blooms to enjoy. Most of the multi-branching varieties get very large and need a lot of room.
- A highly desirable attribute for many people are sunflowers that do not produce pollen. They are clean and lovely, and won't stain.

- To some extent, the size of the blooms can be controlled by how closely they are planted.

The colors now available are amazing. Some of my favorites are:

- ProCut White Lite is a charming variety of fast blooming, pollenless sunflowers. The petals are creamy yellow with gold-green centers. The ProCut series tend to be single stem and pollenless.
- ProCut Gold is one of the “happiest” looking sunflowers I’ve seen! The petals and center are golden, and the very center is lime green.
- Vincent’s Choice is a sunflower with rounded, short petals and a brown center. It looks much like a traditional sunflower, but, in my opinion, is more petit and softer in appearance. It is really exquisite.
- Deep red and bicolor sunflowers offer a lush punch of color to arrangements. Several color combinations are available from oranges and browns, to pinks and cream. Moulin Rouge is a striking color to consider, especially in the fall. It is multi-branching and pollenless, and will produce bloom after bloom on a single plant. And it develops black oil sunflower seeds to feed the birds when the growing season is over!
- And last, but not least, Sun-Fill Green hybrid sunflowers. The heads are valued for their green appearance but will eventually open just a bit to expose a yellow center. This is the stage at which I enjoy them most. There are no “petals” so to speak until they open, and then it’s a small ring of bright yellow. There is also a Sun-Fill Purple version.



Vincent’s Choice

Moulin Rouge

Sun-Fill Green

It’s not too late to plant sunflowers because they usually take only 60 days to mature. In our zone there is ample time to get some beautiful blooms before the first frost.

For long-lasting blooms, harvest when the color of the petals begins to show. I like to harvest a combination of mature blooms for immediate display, and a few buds so that the bouquet lasts longer.

Square Foot and Raised Bed Gardening

❄ Lin Moeller

Square Foot and Raised Bed Gardening seem to go hand-in-hand. Since moving across to this quieter side of the Bay more than ten years ago, my vegetables have been grown in raised bed. The motivator was necessity.

In the midst of renovations to our place, the ground of my future garden area had literally been churned into a compact clay slab by the digging of wells for the installation of a geo-thermo heat system. The predominant plants to grow in this brick hard, pebbly clay were wire and crab grasses. The decision to create raised beds was a quick and easy solution. The plans were drawn…

The size would be a 20 x 24 foot area. This would allow 3 foot wide walking areas around the three 4 x 12 foot

raised beds, each 10 inches deep. Beds should not be wider than four feet to allow easy reach into the middle. The materials needed included:

- Three hundred feet of 4 feet wide landscape cloth, lain in two layers, opposite direction to deter the creeping habits of wire grass.

- Eight 2" x 10" x 12' boards. Avoid pressure treated boards which can leech harmful chemicals into the soil, unless preserved with an Earth-friendly preservative to slow wood rot. Or, use composite boards of recycled materials, landscape bricks, cement blocks, landscape timbers, etc.

- Metal corner supports and 2" galvanized nails – easier to join board ends and are much easier to fasten than trying to join the boards with only longer galvanized nails

- Landscape timbers – placed over the edge of the 20 x 24 foot area to create a border with the lawn and to hold in material (mulch or stone) used to cover the path areas. (Please note – if you are placing your raised bed where invasive plants are not an issue, then the landscape cloth and border timbers may be eliminated.)

Garden soil – Three 4' x 12' by 10" raised beds require a lot of soil! With access to a pick-up truck, we locally obtained 2 cu yds of top soil, 1 cu yd of leaf mulch and 1 cu yd of mushroom compost. To this was **added 6 forty pound bags of sand** (2/bed) and a bag of lime to adjust the pH as necessary. Thankfully, my husband helped to fill the beds with soil, a wheelbarrow load at a time. Half of the mushroom compost was held back to use as a healthy top mulch which would slowly release additional nutrients into the soil with each rain, control any weeds that may sprout from the top, and retain soil moisture.

Once the soil was in the beds, they were watered well and left to settle as a list of desired vegetables and varieties was made. Space and sunlight needs were considered, as well as which would be purchased as plants (tomatoes, peppers, and eggplant) and as seeds. Plants needing support required green metal channel stakes, easily nailed to the inside of the bed edge. Garden twine, chicken wire or netting could be placed between the stakes. Taller vegetables were placed to consider sunlight needs of plants next to them. Squashes were planted at the back ends of the boxes allowing them to flow into the path areas, if they over grew their boundaries.

Each spring the beds were re-planned, making sure not to place plants where they had been the year before. Though if succession planting is done, it is not as necessary. For example, lettuce, spinach or peas may be planted very early in spring followed by bush beans.Or, pepper plants may be interplanted in the middle with carrots or radishes along the edges.Some plants also need the taller plants to protect them from the hot afternoon sun. Be creative in placement.

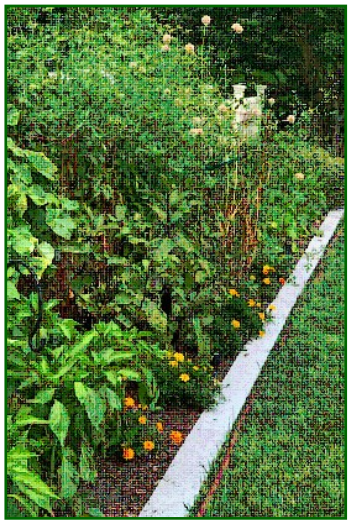
About five years after installing the raised beds, one was noticeably rotting on one side. The reason was the soaker hose that snaked through the bed was much too close to one edge with excess moisture penetrating the inner side of the board and rotting over time. This 4 x 12 foot bed was replaced by two 3 x 5 foot beds and one 4 x 4 foot bed with less walking space between them. I selected my boards at Lowes and had them cut there to the specified lengths. It was again easy to attach metal corner supports to create the beds. The only labor intense part was moving the soil from the old raised bed to the smaller, new ones placed in.

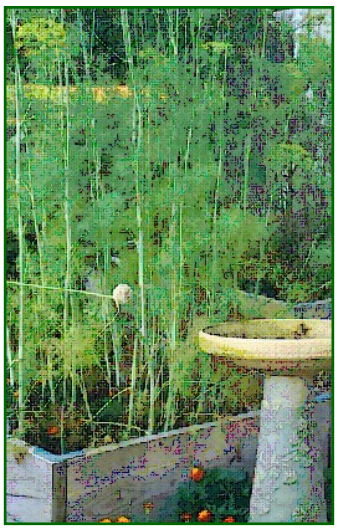
Two years ago, I left my raised beds vegetable garden in the middle of the summer, fully planted to the new owners. My present place also has a raised bed, installed by the previous owners, a 3.5 x 46 foot long bed made of composite TREX material and flanked on the northeast side by a 4 foot high picket fence. In planning and planting this garden, the taller and vining plants (tomatoes, cucumber and pole beans) are placed along the fence with midsized plants (peppers, eggplant, etc.) in front of them, being mindful of room allowances. Root crops (carrots, radishes) or marigolds are planted along the front edge. Herbs are planted in a seven foot section at one end. At the other end, peas then beans are succession planted; peas planted by March 31st, then beans about 6 weeks later between the rows of peas. Finally, chicken wire fencing surrounds this section to prevent the rabbits from munching. As peas dwindle from the heat, the beans are ready to harvest. Everything was mulched with mushroom compost as with my previous garden.

If stepping into the garden is necessary, movable stepping stones are used. Insects are hand-picked or eggs scraped from the undersides of leaves. If an insecticide is needed, a soap solution or organic spray, such as, 'Captain Jacks Dead Bug' is used, spraying it on the stalks and undersides of leaves and avoiding buds and blossoms.

The photos show one of my first raised bed gardens with corner support and a vast quantity of dill, self-sowed and left for the swallowtail butterflies and caterpillars, and two of my present garden.

The bottom line of vegetable gardening is to enjoy it! Pick a couple peas or grape tomatoes and munch on them as you walk about. Be creative and try new varieties. As you cook or share your bounty, be proud of what you grew with help from Mother Nature, of course!!





Overlooked Treasures
* Janet Mackey

The weeds in my garden have received much more attention this year than they usually get. As a result, I discovered several delightful native flowers that may have masqueraded as weeds in the past. Because I had more time for the gardens this year, I let some unfamiliar weedy plants mature and show their stuff. In the past I would have weeded with greater haste, and they wouldn't have stood a chance. Let me introduce you to a few of my new garden flowers.

Carolina Wld Petunia

Carolina Wild Petunia (*Ruellia caroliniensis*) showed a single pretty blue-purple flower at the edge of one of my garden beds. Then I found another and another and another, peppering the nearby lawn. The occupants of the lawn had been pruned by the mower, but they still raised their trumpets and beckoned to me. This was a great find for me, because I had put Wild Petunia on my list of native plants to seek this fall for a particular shady spot. Many sources said Wild Petunia prefers sun, but my new treasures are doing quite well in considerable shade. Now I just need to rescue them before the next mowing.

Spotted St. John's Wort (*Hypericum punctatum*) appeared in two different portions of my yard. Its pretty little yellow flowers made it hard to miss. I first spotted a little patch in an area that I incorporated into my Woodland Garden last year. Being "incorporated" just means we aren't mowing it any more, not that I've planted anything there yet. So this charming volunteer is welcome to settle in, and even more appreciated because it is native. A second plant popped up just in front of the door to our shed. An odd spot since it could have fallen victim to a careless footstep or the mower. Luckily my husband had delayed mowing by a few days which gave it a chance to open its flowers and bring me running with a trowel.

St. John's Wort

Indian Tobacco

My third native treasure is Indian Tobacco (*Lobelia inflata*). It is not a showy plant, but its individual blossoms are adorable. I don't know where the seeds arrived from last fall, but I started finding the plants in my sunny bed early this spring. I didn't recognize the sprouts. However, because there were quite a few, I left

some in the sun and transplanted others to less sunny areas to test its shade tolerance in case it turned out to be a keeper. Given its low-key nature, I probably will move it from my sunny bed since I really expect those plants to put on a show. I'll be happy to let it spread in shadier spots.

I've enjoyed discovering new plants this season. There were many volunteer plants that I didn't recognize that have, indeed, turned out to be weeds once I let them grow enough that I could identify them. But I am happy to welcome three hidden treasures to my gardens.

p.s. I rely on iNaturalist to help me identify plants. It is a free app for smart phones. I open the app, take a picture or two of the plant in question that shows the arrangement of leaves and a flower, upload the photos, and then see what plants the system suggests it might be. Volunteer specialists can review plants that I share and let me know if they agree with my ID or offer a correction.

One Day Wonders - Daylilies

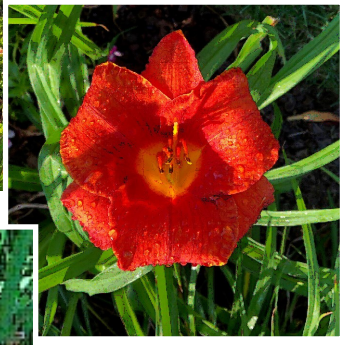
❄ Trish Reynolds

I have always been amazed at the longevity of some of my flower perennials and bulbs in my garden…..some of them like my daisies and black-eye-Susans can bloom for weeks….but then there are my daylilies….each flower only blooms for one day….hence the name!

My introduction to daylilies has been mostly the orange ones we see along the side of the road, and the Stella D'oro planted in my garden. I have admired from a far the beauties some of our club member gardens but never ventured to try them until recently. And now I am loving them….the varieties, the colors, the size of some of their blooms, the repeat bloomers….all of which have me exploring for me this "one-day wonder"!

So here are a few things I have learned about daylilies:

- Individual blooms last for only one day, but most plants produce multiple blooms thus providing a succession of blooms.
- Hybridizers have developed various varieties of reblooming daylilies that will bloom several times during the season.
- Hybrids come in an incredible array of colors…..including pale green, shades of orange, red, pink, purple to almost black…no white or blue (yet!).
- Daylilies like full sun – 6 hours of sunlight is best….the darker colored ones will like a bit of afternoon shade to keep their color sharp.
- Daylilies prefer moist, average to rich, well-drained soil. They will tolerate poor soil, but not tolerate poor drainage.
- When do you plant daylilies? Bare-root daylilies can be spring or no later than 6 weeks before the first frost in autumn.
- When transplanting daylilies, container grown or bare-root, dig a hole deep enough so that the crown of the plant will be the same height as originally grown.
- Remove spent flowers regularly to keep them looking their best. To avoid seed pods from forming, make sure you are getting the entire flower and not just the petals. Deadheading is critical for the re-blooming types.
- Daylilies can spread quickly into larger clumps and eventually they are overcrowded and will not bloom as well. This sparse flowering can be a sign for you to so considering dividing your daylilies – perhaps every 3-4 years.



Dividing Perennials
❄ Kim Eckert

We have all been tending and watching our gardens grow this year. We have the time and desire to be outside and we are inspecting our gardens more thoroughly. This intimate view provides us with the knowledge we need to prepare for the fall and early spring 2021. Many of us have perennials that will require division. While it is hot and humid, we can plan for dividing, replanting and sharing our favorite garden plants without lifting a shovel right now. It is best to dig up the plants in the fall or early spring when the air is cooler than the soil, late September and through October or late March and April. In addition to timing, there are several points to consider.

- Surprisingly, it is best to divide perennials when they have had a strong vigorous season, not a weak showing. Healthy divisions grow into strong plants. Too often, we wait for a plant to show us that it needs to be divided. These plants are typically weaker in the center and more vigorous on the edges. In this situation, remove the center and only replant the healthier edges.
- Dig up the entire perennial at the drip line. Use a perennial fork to loosen the soil around the roots and once you can slightly lift the plant to view the root structure, complete the plants removal with a sharp clean shovel angling down and toward the center.
- After you dig up the plants, keep them moist until you can get them back in the ground. Per Fine Gardening, 50% humidity and 50 degrees are the ideal conditions for holding divisions. Keep the plants in a bucket, box or wheelbarrow in the cool shade and cover them with moistened newspaper to hold in moisture.
- After removing the perennial from the garden, fill in the empty space with compost and renew the soil for a fresh new planting.
- When working with a healthy perennial, divide the original plant into 4-5 sections. As an example, if dividing a hosta of 20 points, divide it into 4 sections with 5 points each. If dividing a stressed or less than ideal specimen, only use the healthiest pieces.
- Water immediately after planting.

Replant divisions in a wide hole and over a wide area. Spread out the roots wide and down over a mound of soil.

Place each division in a hole that is wide and deep enough for its root system. Do not leave any roots facing upward or curling around the edge of the planting hole. It is often necessary to create a small mound of soil to place the crown of the division atop and let the roots drape down on the side of the mound inside the hole. This technique is typically used for daylily divisions but, is beneficial to most plants.

(Picture Source - Fine Gardening Magazine)

In the next growing season, the top of the plant will be as wide as the roots are at the time of planting. Ensure that when you spread out the roots they don't overlap and compete with the others.

There are several theories regarding and late summer and fall blooming plants in the spring. Other sources recommend dividing spring flowering plants immediately after they bloom. Whether fall or early spring, it is best to decide now, based on this year's growth, which plants should be divided. Below is a list of perennials and the suggested season for division:

Early Spring
Achillea, Astilbe, Aster, Chrysanthemum, Coreopsis, Dicentra, Echinacea, Hemerocallis, Heuchera, Hosta, Leucanthemum, Liatris, Nepeta, Phlox paniculata, Rudbeckia, Sedum, Tradescantia

Fall
Paeonia. Allium, Asiatic Lilium, Siberian Iris

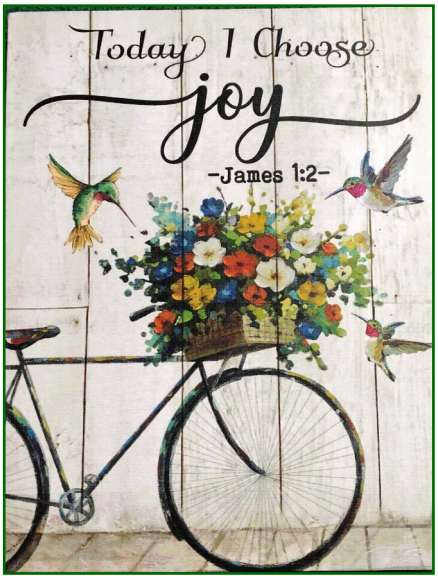
Do Not Divide
Aconitum, Asclepias, Baptisia, Cimcifuga, Clematis, Pervoskia, Platydocon, Poppy

The Proper Way to Divide Peonies

Dig out the whole plant.

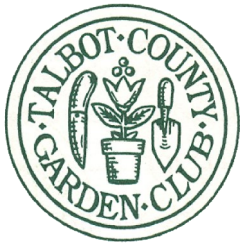
Wash off roots and remove as much soil as possible.

3 Divisions ready to plant.



Thank you once again to our wonderful Horticulture Committee for keeping us engaged, and to you our wonderful readers. Please take care and enjoy the rest of your SUMMER OF 2020!

Trish



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