

Spring Begins at the Gardens

by Joan Andersen

It seems like the entire country is having weather extremes in winter and early spring. In Minnesota, we have had one of the warmest winters on record, with several days approaching 60° and nights barely dipping into freezing temperatures. The snow melted weeks ago, and the sun shining on the brown ground probably helped those temperatures rise. This was followed by "normal" temperatures and 3-6" of snow depending on where you live. As I write this it is only mid-March and there is plenty of time for more winter weather events.



This early spring is nice but the schedule at the Gardens goes on as usual. Experienced staff came back to work on March 27 to begin a new season.

Planting mix, planting trays, and inserts arrived on March 2.

The first plugs (baby plants) arrive at the end of March, and transplanting begins right away.

The Rest Area Garden is a large area between the Rose Garden and gift shop. This area is designed by Gardens Supervisor Nia Primus. The design in 2017 will highlight flowers and foliage in blue, pink, and yellow. Nia observed

that the 'blue' will be more on the purple side since it is very difficult to find flowers in shades of true blue. The design uses flowers and foliage with different shapes, and Nia also chooses flowers known to attract pollinators.

The walkway from the Rose Garden to the gift shop is an area noticed by everyone that visits the Gardens. This year the center will be planted with cassia, also known as the 'popcorn' plant. This plant has been used in the Treillage gardens for years and visitors love it. It has yellow flower spikes set off by attractive gray-green leaves, and the leaves smell like popcorn. The walkway will also be planted with pennisetum "Karley Rose," which is an ornamental grass with pink flowers in summer. Color will also be provided by vinca "Pacifica Rose Punch," lantana "Landscape Pink," and lobularia "Dark Knight." Pink or purple zinnias or pentas will also be used.

The Renaissance Fountain next to the gift shop will feature the same colors

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Plants of the Bible

by William M. Cook

For some years I have been interested in unusual fruit and vegetable sources, including wild plants, weeds, and species popular in antiquity but abandoned by modern agriculture. It was suggested last month that I could write this quarter on the topic of "plants of the Bible," so let's see where that takes us.

Foods and food plants make regular appearances in Biblical scripture, both as literal food and as components of stories and parables. However, would it be possible, if you were so inclined, to grow these plants in your own garden in Minnesota? Are there any long-lost vegetables we should rediscover? I'll

put the plants mentioned in the Bible in several categories, and in the process attempt to answer this question.

First, we need to remember that stories of the Bible take place in modern-day Israel and nearby countries, which have a very different climate than that of central Minnesota. The region exhibits a gradient from a mild Mediterranean climate near the Mediterranean Sea, to harsh deserts farther inland. Coastal areas have surprisingly high rainfall; for instance, Jerusalem has only a few inches less annual precipitation than Saint Cloud. Inland areas can be extremely dry. In both cases, most

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of the annual rain falls in the cooler months, and the hot summers are dry. Lowland areas are cold enough in winter for occasional light snow. This means that some vegetables can be grown both there and here, though other plants are completely inappropriate to our climate.

Grain crops are mentioned often in the Bible. Barley appears around 20 times, millet a couple of times, and wheat over 50 times. (Corn is native to North and South America, and does not appear in the Bible.) Backyard gardeners are not likely to grow significant amounts of grain, but those are of course a regular part of our diet and are grown in our region in bulk.

Another plant group that is mentioned frequently in the Bible is Alliums, or onions and relatives. Garlic, leeks, and onions each make at least one appearance. There are many species and varieties of these plants that are grown in various climates, but many are very hardy here in Minnesota, including several perennial forms that you can buy once and then propagate forever.

Beans of different sorts were staple foods in the ancient Middle East, and they appear here and there in the Bible. Fava beans and chickpeas both are derived from that area of the world and were probably grown 2,000 years ago there, although these species are not identified specifically in English translations. Lentils are also mentioned several times and were definitely a staple food.

One broad group of Biblical plants that intrigue me are spicy herbs. Mustard plants and their seeds figure prominently in several well-known stories. There are various species of mustards, some of which grow in Israel and others in our area. Mustards are in the same plant family as broccoli and kale. "Bitter herbs" are referenced a couple of times in the Old Testament, leaving us to wonder precisely which species were eaten. The entire Mediterranean region has a long tradition of eating slightly bitter leafy vegetables. Modern lettuces are not bitter, but their ancient and wild relatives are. Dandelions and chicory, as well as endive, are plants we think of as weeds, but they are native to western Asia and North Africa and were all eaten by ancient Egyptians. Horseradish is another spicy member of the mustard group which derives from that part of the world, and was likely eaten in Biblical times.

Fruits of various types make scattered Biblical appearances. We might think of viny squashes as annual vegetables, but we actually eat the fruits of these plants, and cucumbers are mentioned at least four times. Melons are also similar and appear at least once. Brambles and thorns are mentioned in stories, and "brambles" refer to the raspberry group of plants. These are both native and commonly grown here in North America, but other species are native all over Europe and Asia, including the Levant. Grapes and their produce, wine, make many appearances in the Bible. Here in Minnesota we are close to the northern frontier of cultivated grapes, but there are several good varieties and native species.

Apples and apple trees figure regularly in stories and metaphor, as in "apple of his eye." And while apples are indigenous to western Asia, they generally require more winter dormancy than is available in the Holy Land. Thus scholars wonder if all those mentions of apples in the Bible are a figment of translation or other historical accident, and perhaps the stories should really be about apricots, which happily grow in Israel.

Sadly olives, pomegranates, and figs are all Mediterranean crops that won't grow in our climate, though I do have a fig tree in my greenhouse that I am hoping will produce some fruit this summer. Date palms and almonds are also too tender for our climate, though they both figure in Bible stories.

So, are there long-lost food sources to be found in the Bible? Not really, though we could stand to rediscover some of the bitter herbs scholars think were referenced vaguely. A number of other plants familiar to us are grown in North America and are part of our modern diet, or at least their relatives are. And some familiar fruits and nuts appear in Bible stories but are not able to grow here in Minnesota or in your garden. It's a good thing we have long distance commerce to bring us figs and olives.

Information for this article was taken mostly from *Foods Jesus Ate and How to Grow Them*, by Allan A. Swenson, Skyhorse Publishing, 2008.

Two Spring Thaws

by *Idella Moberg*

Winds blow in the month of March. Winter has overstayed his welcome. Like an unwelcome guest he has worn everyone out with the same old stories and jokes. Winter's needy. Winter's boorish. Winter torments us with freezing rain, dirty snow, biting wind. Endless wind. We need to thaw out. We make an ultimatum. Either Winter goes or we go! Spring thaw's not here. We need to go.

Mark and I head for a beach on a Caribbean Island. Long Bay on Tortola Island. We've never been there before. A soft breeze. A little calypso downloaded to the phone, voice of Harry Belafonte and some other island rhythm beats. Rum too, why not. Palm trees and sand. Take a spring break away from old snow Minnesota. Thaw out on one of the seven hundred islands that arc along the northern and eastern edges of the Caribbean sea. Google Earth them and admire them from a distance, a curve of jewels strung between Florida and South America upon the most amazing blue brightness. Walk on the beach. Thoughts take flight like a kite on the wind. They fly to where pirates hid their treasure, Long John Silver and Black Beard, Captains Flint and Rackham, to where sailors rolled in on fast sailing ships, to where slaves worked in sugar plantations.

In the month of March a longing to be up north wakes up. It wakes me up in the night. It's a physical longing. I become ill in my need to be in northern Minnesota. We'll go in April, we tell ourselves. It's always nice in April. In



April we have a second thaw. The real one. The one we've been waiting for. My sister Patricia calls me. "The ice is going out on the rivers up north," she says. "It's on U-Tube." I find the site, and together we watch the ice go out on Gooseberry Falls, she at her house, I at mine. Water, no longer turned to stone, bursts out, rages and roars its way down the hill and into the Lake.

Mark and I head up north to a beach we love on Lake Superior. Cutface Creek Beach, near Grand Marais. We walk on large smooth rocks that slide out from under our feet. We begin with a steady trudge until something catches our eye. Slow down. Maybe there's a Thomsonite rock embedded in this lumpy piece of basalt. Proceed one step at a time, bend at the waist, pawing the beach. Look for signs of the colorful stone, drop rocks into our bulging pockets. Stop. Sit on the smooth stones. Sink into a reverie. Thoughts waft in on the cool steady breeze.

Old memories. It was on this very spot where my sisters and I sat with Grandma so many years ago. "Come, girls," she'd

say, "we'll have a picnic today. I'll take you to my favorite spot." She drives us to the rest stop at Cutface Creek. We carry the lunch basket onto the beach.

"Here's where I like to sit," she says, and we settle in on the round stones that had been warmed in the sun while Grandma unpacks the food.

"I baked this turkey and sliced it thin," she says as she hands each of us a white square, white turkey breast on white bread, no crust, spread with white butter, wrapped in a square of waxed paper.

From a thermos she pours us each a cup of hot turkey broth she herself made from the turkey carcass. Our beverage is a mug of fresh icy cold water scooped right from the Lake. Sweet delicious water. For dessert we have red raspberries picked from her garden just before we left her cabin in Grand Marais. We sit and eat our elegant lunch and drink our sweet water and look out at the lake.

One feature of Cutface Creek particularly wonderful, aside from its lovely crescent shape and overall beauty, is that Thomsonites can be found there. Grandma bought them when they were plentiful and easy to find. Strings of them draped around her neck. After spending time at Cutface Creek, Mark and I decide to buy some Thomsonites in Grand Marais.

As we reach the door of the shop the owner pushes past us. "Store's closed," he said. "Ice is moving down the lake." And off we all go to stand on the shore to watch the ice flow down from Canada and on to Duluth. Spring has come.

Spring Yard & Garden Cleanup

by Beth Berlin

So far 2017 has brought us on a roller coaster ride of weather, from unusually warm temperatures in January and February to tornadoes early March, followed by colder than normal temperatures. Regardless when spring really decides to show its face, it is important to take care of spring yard and garden cleanup at the right time; keeping in mind starting too early may cause some problems.

One rule to keep in mind is to stay off the lawn until it feels firm under your foot. If you see footprints when walking on the grass, it is too soon to be out and working on it. Even walking across your lawn multiple times with a wagon or wheelbarrow to do your garden clean-up can cause compaction to the soils. Compacted soils can lead to a variety of future problems such as poor grass root growth and poor water drainage. It is critical to avoid using your lawn tractor or other equipment until the ground is ready.

Another rule to follow is to rake lawns with a lightweight rake, waiting until the lawn is ready. Using a lighter rake removes dead grass and weeds as well as allows air to reach the crowns of the turf grass plants without harming the roots. This also removes rocks and other debris that could pose a problem when you mow. If you have areas of the lawn that are too damaged from snow removal or are areas of thin lawn that will need reseeding, use a heavy garden rake to ruff up and prep for seeding. This provides conditions where there will be good seed-to-soil contact in order for germination.

Rules regarding spring clean-up in your flower beds include removing heavy winter cover mulch as the temperatures begin to rise; too early may leave your plants vulnerable to damage. If any mulch is over 4 inches, it should be removed to



reduce chances of mold. Temporary mulches like leaves, straw, or other plant debris that may have been left behind should be cleaned up. Be sure to separate healthy plant material which can go on your compost pile from diseased material that should not be composted. When in doubt or it appears to have molds, dispose of in another way, including burning.

Cut back your perennials to within 2 inches of the ground; the reason for this is that new buds may be present slightly above ground. Remove the stems and again compost or dispose of. Another necessary task may be to cut back your perennials after growth has started. It is important to do this cutting back early to reduce the amount of stress to the plant.

Fresh mulch can be added once the new growth begins; you do not want to smother the new growth too early because this will lead to weak plants. Typically, a layer of 3 to 4 inches of mulch is adequate to suppress weeds. Personally I never put down landscape fabrics underneath my wood mulches. Basically, landscape fabrics create a barrier between the wood mulch and the soil. Mulch is decomposing on top of the soil and is not able to break down into the soil. Also, it makes quite the mess when you discover your mulch layer is too thick or you want to move plants and now have to deal with a layer of fabric. Happy spring, and enjoy getting outdoors again preparing your gardens for a growing season.

(Beth Berlin is a Horticulturist at the University of Minnesota Extension for Stearns, Benton, and Morrison Counties.)

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Update on Roses at the Gardens

by Joan Andersen

Virginia Rose Clemens Rose Garden has lots of tender plants that are covered for the winter. This year we had some very cold weather in December. Fortunately, this was preceded by snow—nature’s insulator. However, some roses die every year. The mini roses planted at the edges of the beds are especially vulnerable to winter damage. Later in winter we had extremely mild weather with no snow, and Deb Keiser, rose specialist, is hoping that the winter losses are minor. She is seeing green canes higher than usual on the shrub roses. So far, so good!

On order for 2017 are 140 rose bushes and 150 mini roses. Deb orders from several sources and her contacts make it possible to get roses that are still in the testing stage, before they have actually gone to market. They are planted in the “test” areas and Deb and other rosarians evaluate the plants. In addition to developing roses with gorgeous flowers that bloom all season, rose hybridizers are really emphasizing roses that are disease resistant and grown on their own roots (not grafted). There is a new interest in fragrant roses. These qualities are important for roses grown in a public garden and also appeal to the market for homeowners who want beautiful, easy-to-care-for plants.

Star Roses has five new introductions in 2017 and Deb ordered five of each so she can really see how they do. Some of these roses are rated only to zone 5, but they are still worth trying to see if they will grow in our climate. Sometimes they turn out to be more hardy than predicted, or they can be grown successfully here with some winter protection on the crown of the plant.

“Fruity Petals” is a 6' climber with double flowers that are coral with a yellow eye. It was developed by William Radler who hybridized the famous “Knock Out” series of roses that are well known for their disease resistant foliage. It is rated for zones 5-9 (without protection). Deb is always looking for another good hardy climber, so she will be testing this one.

“Canyon Road” is a bushy floribunda that is 3-1/2" x 2-1/2" with bright red, very double blooms that are borne in clusters. It was hybridized by Alain Meilland in France with emphasis on disease resistance.

“Gilded Sun” is a tall floribunda that can grow up to 5' with bright golden-yellow double blooms that grow in clusters. It grows on its own roots and was also hybridized by Meilland.

“Shining Moment” is bushy floribunda that grows up to 4-1/2' with bright pink double flowers and it is slightly fragrant. It is



another disease resistant rose from Will Radler. It grows on its own roots and is rated for zone 5-9.

“Princesse Charlene de Monaco” is a hybrid tea that can grow up to 5' tall. The flowers are fully double apricot to shell pink and are very fragrant. It was hybridized by Meilland.

Generally, the grandiflora, hybrid tea, floribunda, and tender climbing roses are planted in Virginia Clemens Rose Garden where they get winter protection from mulch and construction blankets. Shrub roses are planted in the other rose garden sites nearby, and the hardy ones can be found all throughout the Gardens.

The emphasis on disease resistant cultivars means that the Gardens staff does not have a regular spray program for roses. The staff deals with diseases and insect visitors by careful monitoring and using pesticides only when absolutely necessary—choosing the safest product to do the job. Sometimes this can be as simple as a blast of water from the hose to dislodge aphids. Besides saving staff time, this makes the Rose Garden more friendly to the pollinators that visit the flowers.

By the time you read this, potting mix will have arrived. Deb is working on sterilizing containers to pot up the roses. The roses arrive bare root and need to be separated from their bundles, soaked, tops and roots trimmed, and planted in their pots. Roses grow in the greenhouse until it is warm enough to start hardening them off outside. They will be planted when the roots are developed and they are big and bushy with some buds and flowers on them. They will then look good, and visitors will be able to enjoy them right away.

Music in the Gardens

Here's this year's schedule for "Music in the Gardens," a free Sunday afternoon concert series held on alternating Sundays at 3:00 p.m. Arranged by Munsinger Clemens Botanical Society, the concerts are located near the Gazebo in Munsinger Gardens on the banks of the Mississippi River. Root beer floats are available for only \$1.00.

2017 – 18th Season

June 11	Gypsy Mania Hot Club
June 25	Granite City Brass
July 9	Random Road
July 23	Dennis Warner
Also Memorial Release of the Butterflies*	
August 6	Monday Night Jazz
August 20	Laura Caviani Trio

Program schedule may be subject to change.

* Memorial Release of the Butterflies is a collaborative event between Quiet Oaks Hospice House, Munsinger Clemens Botanical Society, Saint Cloud Symphony Orchestra, and local hospice agencies. At 2:00 pm butterflies will be distributed to participants at the Gazebo. After a short program, at 2:30 the butterflies will be released as symbols of hope and remembrance of loved ones. The concert with Dennis Warner will begin at 3:00 pm. (Butterflies may be purchased online at www.quietoakhospicehouse.org.)

Music in the Gardens Players

Gypsy Mania A spontaneous, vivid performance by some of Minnesota's most stellar gypsy-jazz artists played in the Django Reinhardt French swing tradition of the 1930s. The ensemble includes the unmistakable mastery of jazz violinist Gary Schulte, the diverse guitar styling of Glen Helgeson, tasty, refined bass work of acoustic bassist Steve Pikal, and accomplished jazz drummer Jay Epstein.

Granite City Brass These five dedicated professional musicians have been performing as a quintet for the past 12 years with a repertoire that includes jazz, folk, religious, patriotic, opera, classical, and American music theatre. They all are currently or have been performers with the Saint Cloud Symphony Orchestra, and all have degrees in music or music education. They perform in other musical organizations such as the Lake Wobegon® Brass Band and Minnesota Centre Chorale Orchestra.

Random Road is a talented group of musicians hiding-out and making music in Central Minnesota. Their eclectic and broad musical tastes are reflected in the name of their band. They are willing to go down any musical road to see where it leads. Band members include Joe Meyer, Rick Walter, Nancy Ebel, Nancy Drontle, Susan Schleper, Carolyn Yaggie-Heinen, and Cristina Seaborn.

Dennis Warner and the Ds Recognized for his crafty wit and skillful musicianship, Folk/Americana musician Dennis Warner captivates audiences in over 100 cities each year, cleverly blending up-tempo songs, ballads, audience participation, and humor. With his smooth vocals and six and twelve string guitars, he is joined by the other Ds—Dan Neale, guitar, Derrick Raiter, percussion, and Dennis (D.K.) Kennedy, marimba.

Muggsy Lauer and Monday Night Jazz A love of jazz brought the members of Monday Night Jazz together, and they've been playing practically every Monday night 8-10:30 pm in downtown Saint Cloud for over 13 years. They started at the Tavern on Germain, and moved to the Veranda Lounge in 2006. The current band consists of founding member Muggsy Lauer on guitar, Karl Van Beckum on bass, Mike Anderson on sax, Richard Witteman on trumpet, Dr. John Harlander on piano, and Dr. Terry Vermillion on drums.

Laura Caviani Trio Jazz pianist Laura Caviani is a veteran of two decades of performing, recording, and composing with some of the best jazz musicians in the region. Her recordings have received such praise as "stunningly fresh" from JazzTimes and "in a word, outstanding" from the Minneapolis Star Tribune. She has recently been commissioned by Saint Cloud's Great River Chorale. Performing with Laura will be Chris Bates, bass, and David Schmalenberger, percussion.



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*Spring Begins at the Gardens,
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using different plants. Zinnia Zahara "Raspberry Lemonade" is a bright mix of pink and yellow shades. Blue lisianthus and browallia, pink "Intenz" celosia, yellow agastache, pink gomphrena "Fireworks," and purple-blue verbena "Buenos Aires" give an interesting mixture of flower shapes and colors.

The Formal Garden on the other side of the Rest Area Garden is a full sun area that will be planted in strong shades of red, yellow, and black. The design was done by Deb Keiser, who is also the rose specialist at the Gardens. She chooses plants by color of bloom, color of foliage, shape, form, and height. The garden next to Kilian Blvd. will be planted with pennisetum "First Knight," which is an ornamental grass with very dark foliage, cosmos "Cosmic Yellow," celosia "Dragon's Breath," which is bright red, salvia "Vista Red," celosia "Fresh Look Yellow," and petunia "Black Mambo." There are plantings in the other beds in the Formal Garden, around the Formal Garden Fountain, and in the large urns in the area that will follow the same color scheme using different plants.

So, what could go wrong with all this planning? One grower went bankrupt and cancelled the plant order. Fortunately, the plant broker Nia works with to order plants quickly transferred the order to another grower who was able to produce the 35 flats (about 3000 plants). Sometimes there is a crop failure and seed is not available. When Nia is notified, she chooses a replacement. The gardeners have learned that they need to be flexible at planting time. Sometimes designs are rearranged at the last minute depending on how the plants look or the quantity available. Be sure to visit and see how it all turns out!



Munsinger Clemens Botanical Society
invites you to participate in

*Photography
in the Gardens*

December 1, 2016 — November 2nd, 2017

Have you taken any pictures in Clemens and Munsinger Gardens recently? Our Photo Contest runs from January to November, with entries due this year on November 3 and 4 at the Lake George Municipal Complex, 1101 7th Street South, Saint Cloud. The four categories of photos are Adult and Youth Landscape and Adult and Youth Hardscape. Guidelines and the entry form are available on our website. You can also find lists of winners there. Winning Photos from 2016 will be on display at these locations through 2017:

January—Saint Cloud Medical Group

February—CentraCare

March—USBank

April and May—Whitney Senior Center

June and July—River's Edge Convention Center

September—Saint Cloud Hospital

October—Quiet Oaks Hospice House



Art Fair in the Gardens

Thursday July 20, 10:00 am to 7:00 pm

Shop for high quality artwork for your home and garden: jewelry, weaving, pottery, painting, sculpture, and more. Artist booths are arranged throughout Munsinger and Clemens Gardens so you can enjoy the flowers while you shop. Food and beverages are available on site. Music will be performed throughout the day. For more information go to our website at www.munsingerclemens.com or our Facebook page Munsinger Clemens Botanical Society.

Road Work

The City of Saint Cloud has informed residents of Riverside Drive SE from East Saint Germain Street to the University Bridge that it plans to resurface that roadway in 2017. They are also considering ways to make the road more friendly for bikers and hikers. As we prepare this newsletter, plans and contract bids have not yet been completed, but we expect some inconvenience for summer visitors to Munsinger and Clemens Gardens. We have informed the City Council on dates of Gardens activities and have been assured that our major events will be taken into consideration as work proceeds. Our summer newsletter may have more information, and you can check for updates on our website and Facebook page. — Donna Gorrell, Editor



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