

'Grow Food, Not Lawns'

Replacing a lawn with edible landscaping

This spring, my friends Don Willis and Dobbe Wattenberg removed their 16' x 16' front lawn. They enriched the underlying soil by digging in compost and manure and then planted a "Three Sisters" vegetable garden.

Native American farmers considered corn, beans, and squash the essential three sisters that grow and thrive best when planted together. This is still recognized as a sustainable system for long-term soil fertility with a harvest of high nutritional value.

Now that the plants are getting established, Don and Dobbe decided to hook up a drip irrigation system that would give the garden consistent amounts of water on a schedule. The other factor in their irrigation design was a row of well-established roses that they wanted to keep in front of the house. Together, we came up with a simple system to meet the different watering needs of the two areas.

I've talked before about hydro-zones, or plant groupings with similar watering and care needs. We chose a dual wind-up timer to tailor a watering schedule for each of their zones. Since roses prefer deep and less frequent watering than vegetables, we ran one piece of mainline tubing behind the roses and chose to put one gallon, pressure-compensating emitters on either side of each plant. We calculated that a reasonable amount of water for mature rose bushes was 5 to 6 gallons per week. So, twice a week, that timer can be set for 75 to 90 minutes.

For the vegetable system, we attached a pressure regulator after the timer, and ran rows of 1/4" dripline (this is tubing with inline emitters every 6, 9 or 12") off the 1/2" mainline. For this area, we chose the 9" spacing. It was easy to weave the tubing around the plantings, and stake it down every

foot or so to keep it secure. For the large squash plants, we also added some one gallon emitters at the ends of the 1/4" dripline to provide for their greater moisture needs. This vegetable garden system will run about 10 minutes twice a day, and they'll observe to see if the irrigation is adequate.

In 10' of 1/4" inch dripline (with inline emitters every 9") roughly 6.5 gallons of water per hour are emitted at 20 psi. Measure the total length of tubing and add in water used by any extra emitters to calculate daily water use. In this vegetable garden, we estimate the water use at about 20 gallons per day. The compost and manure in the soil will help retain moisture, as will a layer of mulch on the top. Don and Dobbe chose rice straw for their mulch.

The edible landscape is just one option for replacing a lawn. I've seen many nice native and drought-tolerant plantings in yards around town. Native grasses and ground covers use a fraction of the water of a standard lawn. Other common grass replacements are wood chip mulch or artificial turf. Creative hardscaping with permeable pavers, rocks and sparse plantings gives a minimalist look that can be very attractive, too. However, the "Grow Food, Not Lawns" movement is gaining popularity around the country as a way to get the most value out of urban landscaping.

Jerry Jordan has been working in the field of water conservation for over 30 years. He and his wife, Cheryl, have a Facebook page called "Driplines: Adventures with Drip Irrigation," where they regularly share information about water-wise gardening.



Above: Don Willis and Dobbe Wattenberg, in front of their new "Three Sisters" garden in town. The garden, about a month old, is thriving. "Everybody comes by to check out the progress," Willis said. "It's very much a community stopping point." The kabocha squash (and a few sunflowers) were grown from saved seeds, and the scarlet runner beans and Anasazi corn - the corn plants are set to act as a support system for the beans - were grown from seeds from Bountiful Gardens.



Left: Don and Dobbe with one of the beautiful "old roses" and the new corn stalks and bean plants in their garden. Photos by Jennifer Poole

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The rest of Dinner | From Page 3

branding events of Frontier Days past, and now enjoy being timers at the Junior Rodeo. Mary moved to Willits in the 1970s and raised her two kids, Robert and Nikki, who also still living in Willits. She now has three grandkids. Diane moved to Willits in the 1950s, met and married her high school sweetheart and raised three daughters, Deena (currently in Alaska), and Tracey and Tia, who both reside here in Willits. She is also the proud grandmother of nine grandchildren.

All who attended enjoyed a country-themed meal to correlate with the "Hee Haw Revisited" theme. Cornbread, ribs, pork, green salad,

pasta salad, watermelon, chicken and biscuits were served, and for dessert: cobbler from Kemmy's Pies. The meal was headed up by June Sizemore, also the Willits Frontier Days treasurer, with the help of many other volunteers, servers and cooking crews.

Major event sponsors were honored with plaques of appreciation including Budweiser, City of Willits, Garton Tractor, Geiger's Long Valley Market, Grocery Outlet, Howard Memorial Hospital, Dr. Alfred Kerr, Les Schwab, Lithia Dodge, Mendo Mill, Metal Fx, Nor-Cal Recycled Rock and Aggregates, Savings Bank of Mendocino County, Selzer Realty, Sherwood Valley Casino, Spartime Supply, Tri Counties Bank, Willits Power and Hardware, and Yokums Body Shop.

Above: Willits Frontier Days President Marcy Barry, left, stands with Heritage award winners Mary Burgess (left) and Diane Ford (right) and outgoing 2014 Willits Frontier Days Sweetheart Haley Schuck. Below: The Schmidbauer family gathered around Grand Marshal Eddie, in front. Family includes, back row: Hardy, Clayton, Sadie, Andrea, Britt, Lance, Lynda, Ryan, Lilli, Stetson, Lisa and Kelsey. Middle row: Sam, Cooper, Courtney, Cassie, and Mariah (in front). Center: Eddie and Erlene. Front row: Dean and Wyatt.

Photos by Maureen Moore



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Southwick family reunion draws 140 to Willits

Down in the shady groves of the Rec Grove, the annual Willits Frontier Days BBQ Saturday featured reunions this year: the 1955 class reunion, the 1995 class reunion, and a reunion that drew 140 members of the Southwick family.

The Southwicks, clad in red and white "Southwick" T-shirts, were seen all around town throughout the Frontier Days Celebration. Twenty-five of them were Willits High School graduates, said local Bill Southwick. The furthest flung descendant of Elmer and Gertie Southwick came all the way from Singapore; others came from Virginia, Utah, Oregon, Nevada, Texas and Washington state.

Elmer and Gertie moved to Willits in 1957, Bill Southwick said, and remained here until their deaths (Elmer in 197 and Gertie in 1997). They raised seven children. Visitors enjoyed meeting up at the WHS pool, at the WHS ball fields, at the Mormon Chapel and at the WFD BBQ for lunch and a free Roots train ride around the loop after that. "They love it," Bill Southwick said, when asked if everybody was enjoying the 4th of July festivities in Willits.

— Jennifer Poole



Left: Young fans enjoy the traditional music offered up during Saturday's BBQ. Photo by Jenny Senter



At top, left: Southwicks, young and old, enjoyed their visit to Willits. At top, right: Waiting in line for Saturday's BBQ, served by members of the Willits Rotary Club. At left, above: Willits resident Bill Southwick, at left, surrounded by Southwick family members.

Above, left: One of the contestants in Saturday's horseshoes competition, which benefitted the Willits High School baseball program. Above, right: from left to right: Chelsea Rule, Megan Wolf and Stacy Turner after riding the free Roots train on Saturday. Below, left: Some of the motorcyclists ridden in the parade Saturday displayed at the Rec Grove. Below, right: Mayor Bruce Burton gives out plates and utensils.

Photos by Jennifer Poole





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