

Family

Plant potatoes to a Big Band tune

I'm not sure why I'm sitting here writing about potatoes and while listening to some fine old Big Band music that I grew up with in the 40s - Artie Shaw, Glenn Miller, Bennie Goodman, etc. - when 95 percent of those who plant potatoes in their gardens have their own precise ideas about how to plant, nurture, harvest and store, and whatever I say about growing spuds will result in extreme boredom.

Maybe it's the music. Those wonderful old Big Bands were dominant in the pop-music world when I was a kid down in Ford County 70 to 75 years ago. In those days, almost every family planted at least a half acre of spuds each spring, and stored them in the root cellar for the winter.

About the first of March each year, my Dad would hitch up the two-row lister (with power lift) to the old 10-20 International tractor and list about 15 rows, 50 yards long. Then we would go to J.M. Maricle's Grocery and pick up a 100-pound sack of white Irish Cobbler seed potatoes, and another 100 pound gunny sack full of Red Warbas. We saved the gunny sacks (and many others) for fall storage. It would take almost a week to cut the potatoes into seed pieces, let them cure for a few days, and then plant them about St. Patrick's Day in those previously prepared lister rows.

After the spuds emerged, the work began. My parents appointed me to walk up and down the potato rows with a coffee can half full of kerosene (we called it coal oil) flicking the hoards of Colorado Potato Beetles into the can, one at a time. Failure to do so would, of course, result in crop failure.

Today, a light sprinkling of 5 percent Sevin dust does the job. At harvest time, out would come the



Kay Melia

• The Gardener

lister and the 10-20 and the spuds would be dug, cleaned, and stored in the gunny sacks in the root cellar. The next year, the process would be repeated. Everybody ate lots of potatoes in those days!

That was in Ford County, many miles south of Goodland, Colby and Norton, where it made good sense to plant potatoes on St. Patrick's Day because their season is about two weeks ahead of us and the soil temperature is always close to 50 degrees while ours is closer to 40. Other garden crops, such as peas, onions radishes and spinach, enjoy cool soils, but potatoes, which are slow to emerge anyway, will kinda just lie there.

I'll plant my potatoes about the 15th of April, maybe even the 10th if the soil has warmed a bit. Just as soon as the plants emerge, I'll be on red alert for the beetles, which are almost sure to raise their ugly heads. When they are 6 to 8 inches tall, I will mulch heavily, almost to the point of covering up the plants, with many bags of leaves that I saved from last fall. A deep mulch in the potato patch is the most important step to a bumper crop!

Today's best seed potato varieties are Kennebec (white), Yukon Gold (yellow), Red Pontiac, Norland (red), Dakota Crisp (white) and Norkotah Russet. Always buy certified seed at your favorite garden center. And if the proprietor can provide you with an album of Harry James or Tommy Dorsey music, I guarantee you that your potato crop will thrive, beetles and gunny sacks notwithstanding.

Rising average temperatures haven't changed frost-free date

Kansas' average temperature rose about 1 degree during the 20th century. That fact basically had no effect, however, on the average first-frost (fall) and frost-free (spring) dates, according to State Climatologist Mary Knapp.

She maintains the state's long-term and on-going weather records in the Kansas Weather Data Library. The library's home is with Kansas State University Research Extension, but it also provides a free-access website.

The site maintains the up-to-date average frost-free dates for the official weather stations across the state at www.ksre.ksu.edu/wdl/old/freeze2.htm. Knapp said the dates mark when each station's area typically has 95 percent odds

for experiencing no more freezing temperatures - i.e., spring has arrived.

"Of course, each date also means there's still a 5 percent chance of having another freeze," she said. "Our climate changes very slowly. But our weather can vary widely at any time."

The Parsons weather station has the earliest frost-free date: April 27. The Atwood station has the latest: May 25.

Corrections

The Colby Free Press wants to maintain an accurate record of our town. Please report any error or lack of clarity in a news story to us at 462-3963.

Markets

Quotes as of close of previous business day	
Hi-Plains Co-op	
Wheat (bushel)	\$7.20
Corn (bushel)	\$6.18
Milo (hundredweight)	\$10.66
Soybeans (bushel)	\$12.28

Bridge Club

Meadow Lake bridge winners Tuesday were Dave Ulmer, first; Barb Ulmer, second; Sarah Jane Barrett, third; Jean Snyder, fourth; Margaret Denneker, fifth; and Gail Vacca, sixth.



Whitney Hedden and Bobby Gilbert

Couple plan wedding in Abilene during June

Whitney Hedden and Bobby Gilbert of Abilene plan to marry Saturday, June 11, 2011, at the First Presbyterian Church in Abilene.

The bride is the daughter of Janet and Don Hedden of Abilene. Her grandparents are Lorene and Carl Fengel of Oakhill and Kathleen Hedden of Colby.

She graduated from Abilene High School in 2007 and attended Colby Community Col-

lege, graduating in 2009. She is a veterinary technician at the Abilene Animal Hospital.

The groom is the son of Judy and Gordon Gilbert of Colby. His grandparents are Gala and Derald Brown of Colby.

He is a 1998 graduate of Colby High School and attended the Northwest Kansas Technical College in Goodland. He is a diesel tech at Central Power Systems in Salina.

Colby Rotary Club

The Colby Rotary Club met Tuesday with 28 members and guests Tama Unger, George Werth and visiting Rotarian Dr. Max Heim.

Relda Galli had the program, featuring Werth presenting information on digital telephone communications, including cellular phones and the Internet. He brought a telegraph and noted that during the Cold War, all telephone

offices were required to have a telegraph for communication in the event of a disaster. He also shared a piece of fiber optic cable and explained the dynamics of the ASCII character codes and octets.

President Nick Wells won Roto-Lotto.

The club meets each week on Tuesday in Room 106 of the Student Union at Colby Community College.

Police custodian arrested

MEADVILLE, Pa. (AP) — A custodian at a state police barracks in northwestern Pennsylvania has been charged with stealing \$183 kept by troopers for fund raisers involving their children.

Online court records do not list an attorney for 38-year-old Clifford Seibel Jr., of Linesville, who was arraigned theft charges.

State police say Seibel stole the money the past several weeks from the barracks in Vernon Town-

ship, near Meadville. Police said that Seibel had some of the stolen money, but didn't immediately explain how they traced the cash.

A crime corporal says the money was taken from envelopes kept by various troopers for fund raisers, like cookie sales, sponsored by schools or other groups, in which the troopers' children were involved. Seibel isn't a state employee and works for an unidentified cleaning firm.

To stop pine wilt, destroy dead trees

The only sure way to halt the spread of always-fatal pine wilt disease is to destroy dead pine trees by April - preferably by the first week - a Kansas State University expert says.

That means removing the trees and immediately chipping or burning the wood. Firewood cut from a wilt victim can still serve as a reservoir for the disease's spread, said Megan Kennelly, plant pathologist with K-State Research and Extension.

Central U.S. pines commonly infected are the Scots and Austrian, although mugo pines occasionally fall victim, Kennelly said. The disease has been in the eastern half of Kansas for decades. Last year, however, confirmed cases extended the state's "front line" communities to include Beloit, Great Bend, Hays, Medicine Lodge and Pratt.

"This winter, K-State's diagnostic lab detected cases from even further west," she added. "We're really hoping they're isolated - that appropriate sanitation will prevent further spread."

The disease travels by way of pine sawyers - a type of flying longhorn beetle. The actual tree killers, however, are microscopic

worms known as pinewood nematodes. The beetles and nematodes both overwinter in dead pine wood. They get together when the new beetles emerge from their pupal case and pause to harden. That's when nematodes can enter the beetles' breathing chambers in great numbers.

The adult beetles leave their winter home (around May 1 in Kansas) to find a healthy pine host. There, they bore a feeding hole - which also serves as the entry for their wormy passengers. Once inside, pinewood nematodes are so prolific they often can clog a tree's water and nutrient flow in a matter of months.

"Usually, the first symptom is off-color, gray-green needles - wilt," Kennelly said. "Those needles then turn brown, but don't fall off. Typically, that happens in late summer or early fall, and the trees is dead within a few weeks or months."

More about pine wilt and about diseases that affect pine trees that "look bad, but aren't dead," she said, may be found at www.plantpath.k-state.edu/DesktopModules/ViewDocument.aspx?DocumentID=943.

Abilene Hustlers 4-H Club

The regular monthly meeting of the Abilene Hustlers 4-H Club was called to order March 7 by President Jory Koon. Conrad Heer led the club in the flag salute.

Taylor Todd then led the club in singing "Head and Shoulders." Roll call was answered by 21 members with their favorite dessert. There were no minutes because the secretary was unable to attend. Todd gave the treasurer's report.

Kimberly Gerstner gave the parliamentary tip. She reminded everyone to stand completely when answering roll call. There was no report from the reporter.

Sarah Lamm gave the council report. Council is considering sweatpants and towels as prizes for the grand champions at this year's fair.

Checks for the top five in pizza sales are ready and so are the club checks. Council approved paying for an adult to obtain certification for shooting sports. We need to decide what extension agents Clint Milliman and Diann Gerstner will do if we win the challenge to increase demonstrations and project

talks in our club.

For the community leader report, Donna Lamm said the Fort Hays judging contest was to be March 19. She gave a reminder that County Club Day was to be Friday, March 25, at Sacred Heart School. She also said information on summer camps is available in the newsletter. Lamm presented Cassie Wells with a check for \$50 for being the top seller in the county for pizzas.

There was no old business. In new business, it was the consensus of the club that we would prefer to have sweatpants. The club decided to have Milliman and Gerstner dress up in funny clothes and duct tape them to a wall at the fair if they win the challenge.

For recreation, Lakin Denny had the club play "Four Corners."

Todd led the club in the 4-H Pledge. Lamm announced where the demonstrations and project talks for each group would be given. The meeting was then adjourned.

Hosts for the evening were the Freeman and Strange families.

- Submitted by Sarah Lamm

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Colby Community College Endowment Foundation

Pride of the Prairie

Scholarship Benefit Auction

Saturday, April 2, 2011

Comfort Inn Convention Center

LISTED BELOW ARE A FEW OF THE ITEMS DONATED:

Kenton & Sheila Krehbiel, Lyle & Nancy Saddler, Tracy & Relda Galli, Leland & Roxy Wilson.....NFR Package for Two including Airfare	Jack and Bev Ooley.....CCC Bird House, Framing, and Kansas Welcome Wagon
Beringer Hardware.....Stereo	Janet Wells.....Necklace
CCC Administration.....Nook Color	Janet Hopson.....Handmade Pottery
Claremont Inn.....1 Night Stay	Lois Ferguson.....Rockies vs Mets Package
Colby Rotary Club.....2 Single Passes & 1 Family Pass to the New Colby Swimming Pool	City of Oakley.....Family Season Pass to the Oakley Pool
Commercial Sign Co.....Fishing Trip for 2 to Lake Texhoma	Grinnell Locker.....Hog and Processing
Country Stampede.....2 Country Stampede Sunday General Admission Tickets and Hotel Stay	Logan County Imp.....Toy Napa Truck
Mike's Locker.....Hog Processing	Mitten Inc & Sleep Inn-Oakley.....One Night Stay and Steak Dinner for 2 at the Buckhorn Restaurant
Dillons.....Patio Set	Oakley Cleaners.....Starch and Press for 10 Jeans OR 10 Shirts
Farmers & Merchants Bank/Farmers State Bank.....KSU vs Baylor Football Package	Peoples State Bank.....1 lb Silver Liberty Eagle Coin and Display Case
First State Bank of Norton.....Silver Dollar	Ted's Boot Repair & Tack.....1/2 Sole & Heel
Hajoca Corporation.....Pullout Faucet, Kitchen Faucet, and 2 Bathroom Faucets	Palace Drug Store.....Clock
Kansas Cosmosphere and Space Center.....2 - All Day Mission Passes	Plum Creek.....Men's Suit
High Plains Radio.....20 - 30 Second Spots	Someplace Special.....Box of Romance
Office Works.....Lazy Boy Recliners	Sonic Drive-In.....10 Meal Gift Cards
Pit Road.....NASCAR Tickets	Total Image.....3 Cookie Lee Bracelets
Stockton Pharmacy.....Outdoor Fountain	Colby Furniture.....Bath Spa
Tubbs & Sons Ford.....Taylor Swift Concert	Mark & Tonya Winger.....Inspirational Tile
ZEZ Commodities.....1 oz Gold Coin	Shari Oren.....Silpada Necklace
	Oakley Livestock.....100 lbs of Hamburger delivered to Buyer
	Nick Wells.....Pie of the Month

For Reservations Call: (785) 460-4684
 Tickets still available

\$35 per person or \$250 for corporate table of 8
 Doors Open 4:45 p.m. • Buffet Dinner 5:30 p.m. • Live Auction 7 p.m.

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