

2026

# SPRING HOME & GARDEN

*Spirit of Bainbridge*



## Tastes from the Garden!

By Anne E. North

Is there anything more delicious than food you have grown yourself? Okay, I admit. We cheated a little bit. We bought red and green romaine lettuce plants, as well as spinach plants, so our salad greens have been tasty and abundant this early. We planted seeds as an ongoing salad option.

A dear friend gave us a chive plant two years ago, and this year I happened to learn that the fuzzy purple flowers are edible, so guess what graced our lovely salad last week?! (Yes, most food stylists would have set a fancy table to photograph this delight, but I wanted the colors of the veggies to pop!) Those flowers really hold the salad dressing! And that lettuce pictured is from our garden, too! (I am quite sad that, when our tomatoes and carrots are at the ready, the lettuce and spinach will be history, even though we try successive plantings, because Ohio summers are just too hot for those plants.)

And the fresh spinach, quickly sautéed in EVOO with garlic and chopped Hungarian peppers and topped with diced tomatoes? Well, that disappeared before I could take a photo! Yum! I did find Hungarian hot pepper plants in a three-pack, so our fingers are crossed that they will be abundant, even if we have to buy baby spinach for this delicious recipe. (Remember, you can adjust the heat of the peppers by the amount of "veins" you take out or leave in.)

Our green onions can be listed in the success column, and the radishes look promising. Fingers are crossed for a good carrot crop after we fine-tuned the soil. If they encounter any obstacle, they become gnarly, making them difficult to clean and use...but oh, the flavor is a delight!

The jury is still out on the asparagus plants. Maybe next year... In the meantime, neighbors David and Jason have offered us free picking of their well-established asparagus patch. Yay!

Even though 90 percent of our garden is in the ground (and containers!), I am still vigilant when I happen to visit a garden store, and *voilà!* I found not the plants, but the seeds for English cucumbers! Yay! These were the cukes we had such fabulous luck with two years ago. They climbed trellises. The fruits hung like long emerald earrings. They graced more than two dozen Greek salads that summer. And I learned to make tzatziki sauce (I'm told that the Greeks finely chop, not grate, the cucumbers) and we adored its zesty flavor on so many different meats.

Not only does the weather play havoc with our spring planting, but the squirrels have been seen enjoying the feast on a couple of occasions, and we think the failure of our peas is due to sparrows pecking at the newly-emerged plants.

And speaking of the weather, we just installed a rain barrel near the garage spouting to capture summer rains and help water our plants. Hope we haven't jinxed the weather. No drought wanted! (Hark! I hear raindrops as I type this!) We'll keep you posted, but we think this will be a valuable investment as summer wears on.

Enough about the vegetables — although we feel pretty good about being able to grow some of our own food! — and let's have a word or two about the beauty of our flowers!

Because of our nation's 250th birthday of independence, we selected a red, white and blue theme — easily accomplished because all

of our containers were bright blue. We leaned toward tried-and-true red and white geraniums for the most part, but wanted something different for our eight hanging baskets and four long window planters. So we agreed on white and bright red Calibrachoe, which seems similar to mini petunias although it tends to trail a bit, a feature we like.

I recently read to pick flowers for a container based on these words: "Thrillers" (height/drama) like Dracine, Maiden Grass, Gerber Daisy, Salvia, Coleus or possibly Lemongrass (as a mosquito deterrent); "Fillers" (the basics) such as begonias, verbena, impatiens or geraniums, and "Spillers," the trailing Vinca Vine or Creeping Jenny. Good advice to keep it interesting!

Of course, some flowers just won't fit into a red, white and blue theme no matter how hard we try! We always plant a large dish near our patio with marigolds as mosquito repellent, and even though the tag says Durango Red, they are a dark orange. And two of our containers are always planted with early blooming violas in our high school colors of purple and gold — but those will be finished by Fourth of July and we'll replant the bright blue pots with red and white flowers of some type. The prolific patch of Lamb's Ear has fuchsia pink flowers, the Astilbe blossoms are red, but hidden by taller flowers just now, and the lush Cat's Pajamas shrubs hold lovely lavender flowers. Nature's floral rainbow, don't you agree?

Of course, we add citronella plants near the patio also as a mosquito deterrent, but we are prone to those itch-inducing critters so we use an organic bug repellent, too. And don't get me started on poison ivy! Yes, hubby is miserable with it right now. But, hey, that's summertime, isn't it?

So, we hope your summer is filled with good tastes, good friends, fantastic flowers and very little itch from pests or plants! Celebrate America's milestone birthday with your colorful garden plants — and watch for our special patriotic issue on June 26!



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# How Badly Do You Want It?

By Jeff Griff

The end of May marks the conclusion of the miracle that is spring bird migration. Over the years I have disclosed many of my birding adventures and this year I have yet another saga to share, a tale to tell, a report to...report.

Over the past several years I have been tracking my bird sightings, trying to accumulate as many different species (lifers) as possible. Throughout the process, chasing birds has taken me to many interesting places that I would never have been to otherwise. This spring I came across a Californian coastal cruise that not only provided an opportunity to gain many new lifers but was less expensive than staying in a local Motel 6. Sailing out of San Diego to Vancouver B.C., this repositioning tour was only four days (about as long as I could stand to be on a ship) but would allow me to not only see birds that rarely come to land (pelagic species) but also visit a couple of very cool locations on either end of the voyage.

Having been to San Diego several times before I knew what to expect but it was still a great visit and included some great birding sites at La Jolla beach and Mission Bay. The cruise was a cruise and as my life list of birds grew so did my waistline...I should have skipped the deluxe beverage package! While I had been around Vancouver, I had never really spent any time there and found the city to be vibrant and exciting. Rhododendrons, Azaleas and Magnolias were all on full display at the VanDusen Botanical Gardens, which was a highlight of the trip. Granville Island and Stanley Park were both within walking distance of our hotel and we thoroughly enjoyed our experiences there.

On our final day in Vancouver, I hired a birding guide to take us around town to help us find more of the birds that are not readily found here in our part of the world. Evan is a 22-year-old college student studying biology at the University of Victoria with a goal of a career within the world of birds. Evan is a tremendously talented birder, and I had shared with him my "target" birds...the birds that I would really like to find so he could plan our day accordingly. Many of these target birds (like Chestnut-Backed Chickadee) were common to his area and were not difficult to find but nonetheless exciting for us to see. A few others were more difficult to locate (like Townsend's Warbler) but Evan did a great job helping us to find (and photograph) these as well. One bird on my list has been a "nemesis" bird for me. A bird that I had set out to find on many occasions but had yet to spot. Neither substantially rare nor dramatically notable, the American Dipper has somehow eluded me for years. The Dipper isn't big or colorful but this sooty gray bird, about the size of a robin, fascinates me in its habitat and feeding behavior. Dippers are generally found along shallow, fast moving, cold mountain streams generally sitting atop rocks/boulders and diving under the rushing water to retrieve aquatic invertebrates, fish eggs and snails. While visiting many streams in Utah, Colorado and Arizona, known to have American Dippers present, I had not yet laid my eyes on one, but Evan was determined to remedy my plight.

*I had shared with Evan my "target" birds...the birds that I would really like to find.*

For those of you who are not into birding, it may seem inconceivable that anyone would go to this degree of inconvenience simply to see a bird but that's what crazy bird people do! I'm just a little embarrassed to say that I not only have driven hours in the hope of seeing a specific bird, in a couple of cases (like the Varied Thrush in Green Valley, Ariz.), I have done it repeatedly only to fail to gain my "target" lifer. On other occasions, like the Red-cockaded Woodpecker which is very rare with extremely specific habitat needs (they only nest in live pines usually infected with red heart fungus that softens the wood allowing for easier excavation), once I pulled into the parking area of Big Branch Marsh

NWR in Louisiana, there were a group of them clamoring in the trees right above our car. Rarely easy, usually difficult, many times unsuccessful... searching out unusual target birds is always an adventure!

As you look at the top 10 things to do in Vancouver you will find the Capilano Valley at the top of the list. This steep river valley of lush, temperate rainforest features a suspension bridge, salmon hatchery, hiking trails and (believe it or not) the Cleveland Dam that helps supply much of Vancouver's drinking water. Evan was confident in his ability to find American Dippers here, so we set off among the towering trees and giant ferns in search of Dippers. Up the trail to the foot of the dam and looking down into the deep ravine we observed the ideal habitat of fast-moving whitewater but no Dippers. Following the Capilano River downstream, the gorge became even deeper as we came across incredible waterfalls, beautiful, deep calm pools and much more whitewater but still no birds. It was evident now after an hour or so of searching we were now coming back to the parking area and Evan was feeling a bit worried that we wouldn't get our bird. We were simply enjoying the beautiful surroundings so as much as we tried to put his mind at ease; his frustration in not finding this bird was clear. Standing adjacent to the parking area, looking down into the 120-foot-deep gorge, Evan asked if I was up to going down into the ravine to get a closer look. An abandoned and dilapidated walkway leading down to the river was cordoned off but we scaled the railings and descended into the abyss. At the end of the stairs the streambed was filled with smooth, moss-covered, laundry basket-sized boulders that were treacherous to navigate. Our goal was to head downstream, around the blind corner to be able to view a sheltered stretch of the river we couldn't observe from above. Slipping and sliding our way across the massive stones, binoculars, cameras and sighting scopes in tow, we finally rounded the corner and Evan pointed ahead exclaiming, "There they are!" A little gray bird sat atop a rock right in the middle of a stretch of whitewater that would make any kayaker cringe. As I secured a stable perch and pulled my camera to my eye the Dipper did what Dippers do, jumping into the full-on rapids completely disappearing from view only to reappear seconds later on the same rock. Again and again he dove... again and again emerging to the surface of his favorite rock. Soon he was joined by his mate who shared

the same rock and same Dipper buffet. Both our cameras were clicking away taking photos of this most unusual behavior amongst these most unusual and extraordinary surroundings. Turning to see that Evan was just as excited and entranced as I was made this moment even more remarkable and memorable.

So, I ask, "How bad do you want it?" It seems that nowadays we are offered amenities that make life easier than ever before. Want a meal, there's an app for that. Want to lose weight, there's a pill for that. Want to complain, condemn or vilify (without the peril of face-to-face interaction), there is social media for that. Don't get me wrong, I like modern conveniences just as much as anyone, but sometimes I think some things have gone too far.

Two hundred and fifty years ago, Thomas Paine is credited with the saying: "What we obtain too cheaply we esteem too lightly; it is dearness only that gives us everything of value."

I like that...I hope you do as well.

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as the weather often doesn't match  
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(An occasional rainbow is surely a bonus!)

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through shiver chill and blistering heat,  
mucho rain and thirsty drought.

Their beauty distracts us while  
they provide sustenance to the bees.

But beware! Poinson ivy lurks!

Tender vegetable plants amaze us,  
providing food for our table.

(We only wish all the salad components were  
ripe at the same time!)

Shorts and flip-flops are breezy and liberating  
after winter's multi-layers.

Sunshine warms our skin

And the dance continues...

Anne E. North  
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## Everything and the Kitchen Sink!

### Notes in the Kitchen

By Anne E. North

I recently read an article about Fanny Farmer, whose name we associate with candy. But it seems she was responsible for developing the standards for measuring what we use in the kitchen. Most of us know the frustration of our grandmother's or great-grandmother's recipe that calls for "a pinch of" a certain ingredient or a "small scoop" of another. In the days when food was scarce, those cooking for their families could not afford to botch a recipe due to an irregular amount of flour or butter or whatever. (I remember trying to replicate my dear grandmother's simple raisin cookies but never did get her vague directions to work out the way she did!) So the next time you are preparing a recipe according to directions, give a nod to Fanny Farmer for her insistence of a standard for our kitchen measurements!

\*\*\*\*\*

Yes, our New Year's resolutions remind us to cook at home more, dine out less to save our hard-earned dollars. With that savings, we can justify a couple of convenience foods.

Simply Potatoes, diced or shredded hash browns, turn a simple breakfast or brunch into a hearty meal. We stock up when they are on sale. Turn those chopped potatoes into Potatoes O'Brien with a bit of chopped bell pepper and onion. Add some shredded cheese to the shredded hash browns just before serving. (Like most items in the frying pan, cover if you want to heat them through, but take the lid off to brown them nicely.)

\*\*\*\*\*

A reminder to salt your vegetables (chopped onion, bell peppers, celery — known as the Holy Trinity of the Kitchen) — about 15 minutes before adding to your recipe. This helps extract the flavors, so use the liquid, too!

\*\*\*\*\*

Here's a refreshing taste for summer. Serve with tortilla chips on the side:

- 2 tbsp. olive oil, divided
- 3 cups fresh or thawed frozen yellow corn kernels
- 1 tsp. salt, divided
- 1/2 tsp. ground cumin
- 2 15.25-ounce cans of black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 cup chopped fresh or drained canned tomatoes
- 1/2 cup chopped red onion
- 1 jalapeño, chopped
- 3 tbsp. fresh lime juice
- 1 garlic clove, grated or minced
- 1/4 cup chopped cilantro leaves

Sauté the corn in a tablespoon of oil, seasoned with 1/2 teaspoon of salt. Add cumin. Set aside and let cool. Mix other ingredients; add the corn. Mix and chill. *Olé!*

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