

Columns

Reducing yard space since the grass won't grow

When all else fails add more flowers. I have tried now for three years to grow grass on the north side of this house and I have written before that when we lived here 50 years ago there was a little grass but it was sparse. I have had the trees cut back to let in more light, I have brought in new dirt and mulch and fertilized and sowed seed a number of times, all with no success but I do have a nice crop of short weed ground cover. As a last resort I decided to have the soil analyzed and to my surprise I was told that there is way too much weed killer in the soil and it is killing the grass seed. This result is a good explanation of why I sneeze so much when gardening on the north side. I am allergic to all yard sprays and have never used any on our properties so I am not at fault but apparently all the previous owners did not understand why they could not grow grass either. I know for a fact that the previous owners used a yard service because all the front grass has been burned by too much chemical.

This situation has deviled me to no end so I started my new project by reducing the size of the yard space by having a four foot wide walk poured. I really love this addition to the north side; it looks like a long patio but is quite functional for gardening. I am now laying all the bricks I scavenged a couple weeks ago in a 10x12 section

Memories and Musings

By Cheri Sims



which I am calling a roofless teahouse; this is also reducing the yard space considerably but it still leaves a five foot wide section which stretches the length of the house. I have accented the brick teahouse floor with a few sections of left over wrought iron fencing and added four Sheppard hooks with hanging plants at each corner. I have also strung clear strings of lights around the tops of the Sheppard hooks and am quite pleased with the new outdoor living space.

As Chessy cat and I were enjoying sitting in the new teahouse and admiring our three week, exhausting progress, I realized that the most obvious decision for the remaining yard space had eluded me and it should have been so simple; add more plants! Of course, why had I not thought of this over the last three years? I shall simply increase the shade garden beds on the north side and eliminate the grass-less area completely. I could not have thought of this idea at a better time; all the garden centers are reducing the prices of

their remaining perennial plant stock; so here I go adding more gardening space to the landscape!

It has been a while since I have done complete shade gardening so I decided I had better do a bit of research to refresh my memory about shade plants. While doing this research I discovered that there are actually some herbs which grow in shade. This is something I have never read up on and was pleased to note that I might be able to add a few more perennial herbs in my garden. I would imagine I will have difficulty finding them at this late date but it never hurts to look. I just might be able to get a few starts going this year.

The first shade tolerant herb I located was bee balm and this surprised me because I always thought it needed full sun. Luckily I had planted two lavender bee balm plants this spring but was not happy with where I planted them; the storms last week flattened the tall plants and I had to cut them back and lost all the flowers so

this might be a good time to transplant them. I have never grown chervil or lovage but after a quick research of recipes I decided to give them a try. Apparently mint and some thyme will tolerate shade as well as lemon verbena, hyssop and chamomile. I love the hyssop fragrance and try to plant it every year but it never seems to survive our cold winters. It will be fun to see if these herbs will, in fact, grow in the shade.

I have started harvesting this year's crop of sage and basil and the sun porch, which I use for herb drying, smells great. I do have to be careful not to hang the new herb bunches

to low because the cats love to graze amongst the freshly picked herbs. This next week I will be making my first recipe of basil and sage cream cheese, which I will eat until I get sick of it. This is one summer treat I really pig out on. I also ate my first container yellow tomato on July 4. The plants are quite spindly and each plant has only produced one tomato but it sure was delicious. I will wait patiently for the second one to ripen and savor it as well. Thank goodness for my friend who planted four yellow tomato plants for me in his garden and for the farmers markets to supplement my lack of ability

to grow tomatoes. Enjoy the bounty of summer!

Sage Cream Cheese

16oz Cream Cheese
1/2 c Butter, softened
1-4 Cloves Garlic, minced (I prefer onion powder)
3-4T Fresh Sage, minced
Mix all ingredients in a bowl until well blended.
Let flavors meld overnight.
Best if served at room temperature for dips.
Spread on bread, crackers or tomato slices. <https://rollinggreennursery.com/sage-cream-cheese/>.

Two solar eclipses coming up

Tomorrow morning, a thin crescent Moon sits just beneath the Pleiades star cluster. The pair, separated by just 2.5 degrees, rises at 2:30 a.m. in the east but if you want to check them out with binoculars, wait until they are higher in the sky. Jupiter leads them as they ascend the morning sky.

You may have heard we have two solar eclipses coming up, one on Oct. 14 and the other next April 8. If you remain in central Illinois, both will be partials but do you know where you might go to see the full event? Thursday evening,

In the night sky

By David Leake



the CU Astro Society meets (7 p.m., Staerke Planetarium) to discuss plans to observe the two eclipses we have coming up and we'll talk specifically about plans for next April. Join us if you're interested!

David Leake is retired Planetarium Director of Staerke Planetarium at Parkland College and co-founder of the Champaign-Urbana Astronomical Society, Inc.

My answer varies, my reasons are complicated

My anxiety is always triggered when someone ask "How are you?" This is because I have seconds to analyze the answer to the question.

First, I have to figure out if I actually know the person. I'm searching my brain for their name and remembering if they told me it or do I just know of them and heard their name elsewhere.

If I don't actually know them, I can resort to a quick "Good, and you?"

If I know them, things get elaborate.

It starts with the deep inner

Margie's Mess

By Margie Carter



dilemma of "do I actually want to speak to this person?" Are we friends and do they actually care about how I'm doing?

The answer to this occasionally involves recounting

the last time they asked. If in the past I was honest and gave them an answer that truly reflected my current state and their reaction gave away that they actually hadn't meant to get pulled into a conversation,

then I can give them the "Good, and you?"

If they had shown genuine desire to hear about the silly complaints and small triumphs of my days, we can move on to the next step.

This step has little to do with the person asking and everything to do with how I'm actually feeling. Am I in a state where I can clearly articulate my mood? At times, I'm still fresh from having done something that I haven't fully processed or that the end result is too variable, so it would be best to not express the details

yet. However, if I'm ready to speak about the in and outs of what I'm up to, another burning question needs answered first.

Can I trust this person? Often, it doesn't matter how much I need to speak or vent or simply socialize, if the person has a reputation for loose lips, I had to evaluate exactly how much to put out. There's always the concern of my words changing in transit as well.

Finally, if this person has made it this far, I can unload an

uncomfortable "Fine, I guess."

But the real indicator that I think they can be trusted is when I go into the long explanation for the latest things I've put on my plate or the woes of raising my children. If you are on the receiving end of those details, you may be uncomfortable but you can bask in the knowledge that in a matter of seconds you hit every check mark.

Of course, if my answer stopped short, it's very likely that I simply do not want to go into detail and has nothing to do with who you are.

PUZZLES

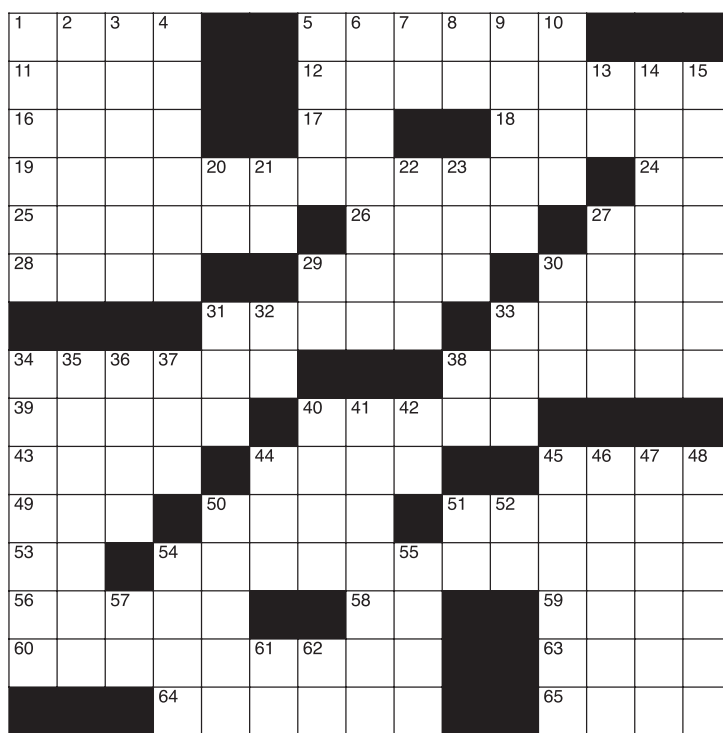
CROSSWORD CLUES

- CLUES ACROSS**
- Database management system
 - Medical procedures
 - ___ Clapton, musician
 - Defender
 - Exert oneself
 - Indicates position
 - Prevents river overflow
 - Atrocities
 - Mister
 - Ends
 - Slope or tilt
 - Taxi
 - The very ends
 - Actor Sean
 - Japanese persimmon
 - Sours
 - Beneficiary
 - Baseball official
 - Muddy, boggy ground
 - Not worldly

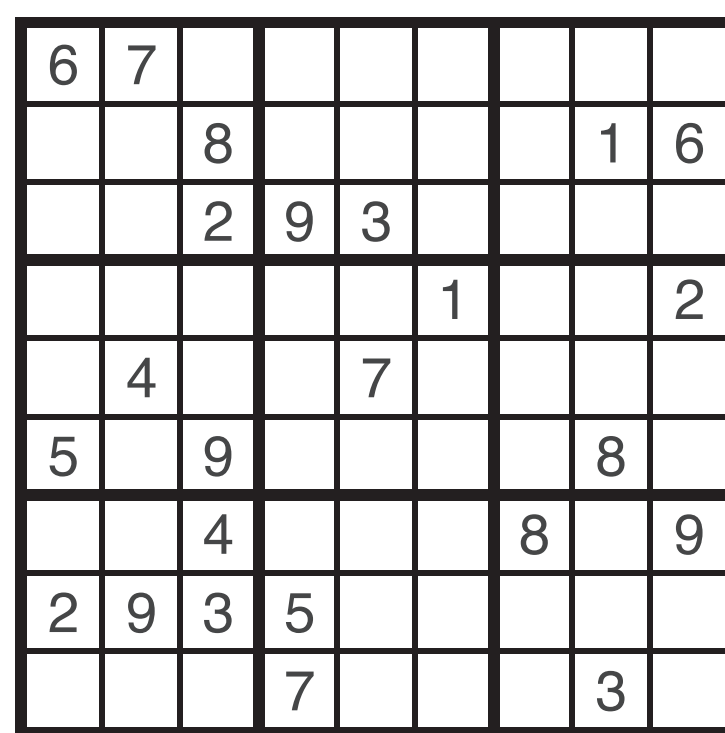
- Actress Lathan
- Soil
- ___-Cola
- Asleep
- ___ Angeles
- Give birth to a child
- Beach shelter
- Commercial
- Taste property
- Local jurisdictions
- It cools your home
- Dismounted from a horse
- Charge with a crime
- Close in
- Spoke
- Famed garden

- CLUES DOWN**
- Draw a scene
 - Its sultan is famous
 - Unlucky accident

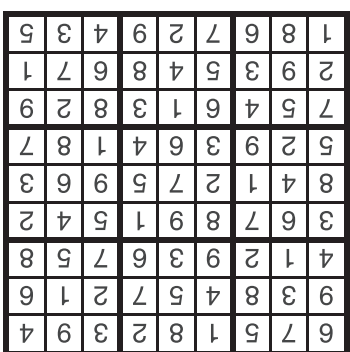
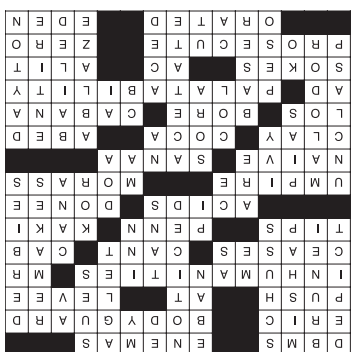
CROSSWORD



SUDOKU



SOLUTIONS



- A way to ski
- Abba __, Israeli politician
- Saw
- "Westworld" actor Harris
- Belonging to me
- Shoelace tube
- Takes to court
- Early multimedia
- In a way, produces
- Bowlers
- Of I

- Equally
- Gets some sun
- A place to stay
- Town in Galilee
- Aronofsky film
- Klingon character, "Star Trek"
- Equal to 100 square meters
- Atomic #58
- Arrived extinct
- Loosen grip

- A distinctive odor that is unpleasant
- Membranes
- Some is poisonous
- Partner to Pa
- Small brown gray rail
- A salt or ester of acetic acid
- Sodium
- Military official (abbr.)
- Lighted
- Took off

- All
- Ohio city
- More abject
- A radio band
- Controversial tech product (abbr.)
- Monetary unit
- Passed with flying colors
- A way to win a boxing match
- The Golden State
- Home of the Longhorns