

JUNE'S GARDEN

POACHED EGG, OR IS IT OVER SUNNY SIDE UP?

During July my garden is at its peak performance, and filled with color, as the wide variety of perennials and annuals come into full bloom. Most leading garden plants we now grow originally were collected from the wilds. The plants we use today have been cultivated for so long that many of the original species are unknown. They have been greatly changed by domestication, by hybridizing and selection which has improved their form, size, color and garden value.

One of the plants that grows in my garden and has performed for years in its original state is a low-growing annual. During May and June this plant's bright yellow flowers seem to fill the garden with rays of sunshine during spring's cloudy overcast days.

I first saw these flowers growing in Dorothy Lindsey's garden in Cannon Beach. She gave me seeds from her plants that she called 'Poached Egg,' and told me that her seeds she had collected from the hills near her home when she and her family lived in California. She said they were growing wild along with the orange California poppy. Dorothy died many years ago and I have carried on her legacy by sharing seeds of 'Poached Egg,' Latin name *Limnathes douglasii*, with people from all over the U.S., and labeling them 'Dorothy's Poached Egg Plant.'

Two ladies from England visited my garden in 1996 during the time when this plant was in bloom and commented that they also grew this flower and that it was commonly used in English gardens. I was surprised, as the first time I'd seen it was in Dorothy's garden and most visitors I've shared the seeds with also were unfamiliar with this plant.

I've continued to correspond with one of the English ladies, Jacqueline Giles, who lives in Bolton Percy, York, England. Giles is a well-known primula (primrose) grower in England. She writes articles and lectures about primulas throughout England. Her garden was featured last spring in "The English Garden" magazine that showed the wide variety of Elizabethan primroses she specializes in growing.

Giles recently sent me articles taken from the journals of David Douglas, telling about this famous plant collector, collecting seeds in 1829 of a buttercup-like yellow/white flower, an annual growing in California. He sent the seeds back to England and at that time this plant was identified as *Limnathes douglasii*.

David Douglas was born in Scone, Scotland on June 25, 1799. He was more interested in nature than in schooling, and at the age of 11 became an apprentice in the gardens at Scone Palace. Because of his interest, he was encouraged and guided by his succession of employers and supervisors. He quickly rose from a garden lad to an expert plantsman. In 1823, under the employment of William Hooker in Glasgow, Scotland, he was recommended to become a plant collector for the Horticultural Society of London, now called the Royal Horticultural Society. For the next 11 years, until his untimely death caused by an accident in Hawaii in 1834, he sent back to England to be cultivated and identified 20,000 herbarium specimens and introduced more than 240 plants new to cultivation to Britain. Many of these plants he introduced were collected here along the north coast: salal, spruce, vine maple, huckleberry, flowering current, and snowberry, to name a few.

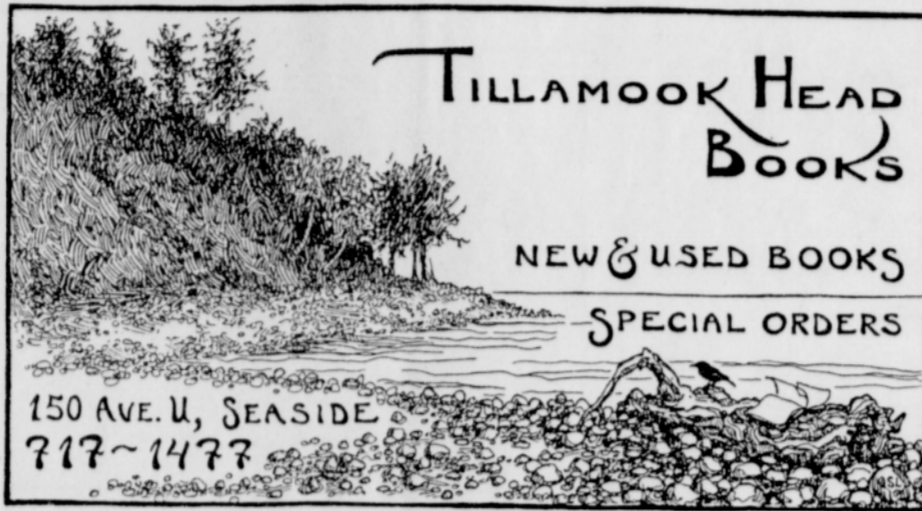
Sometimes the Latin name of a plant will identify its origin, such as *Eschscholzia californica* (California poppy) or *Papaver orientale*, the large orange flowering poppy that blooms in June and is from Asia. However, many Latin names identify the color or the collector—such as *Limnathes douglasii*, named after D. Douglas. The origin of my *L. douglasii* came from Dorothy. I'll continue to call it, 'Dorothy's Poached Egg Plant.'

In May and June when this plant is in bloom, I always think of Dorothy and how, when she brought this plant from California, she brought a bit of sunshine to brighten our gardens here on the North Coast's overcast spring days.

Tracy Erfling N.D.
Naturopathic Physician

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From The Lower Left Corner
Victoria Stoppello

Leading by example

My neighbor Nellie drove through Nehalem, Oregon, recently and said later, "Nehalem just gave me a good feeling. Just driving through, it seemed to be a nice little town."

"There's a reason for that," I responded, "Let me tell you about Lee Dillard." Lee was Nehalem mayor for 16 years. Lee's family owns the local phone company and he's the general manager. He excels in both arenas.

We didn't realize how spoiled we were by Nehalem Telephone until we moved to Ilwaco and couldn't get the same kind of service. For example, we wanted to get letterhead and business cards printed in anticipation of moving, but Pacific Telecom wouldn't assign us a number until the day the phone went in.

By contrast, Nehalem Telephone had all kinds of help for a small business like ours. They installed fiber optics in the early eighties and DSL lines a year ago. They offered alternative long distance options quickly, not like the company here that refused to invest in the necessary equipment until the federal deadline. On one occasion, when costs were lower than expected, Nehalem Telephone sent customers refunds voluntarily without an order from the utilities commission.

Lee's company could be counted on for generous and reliable financial support for just about any venture that benefited the community. When NT&T sold its direct TV operation, they distributed the profits (over \$100,000) to numerous community efforts, including schools, library, recycling, and programs for seniors and kids.

But, what was really striking was how Lee handled his role as mayor. In my job for the community college, I occasionally had to go to city council meetings in the various towns to ask for money for special projects, like fixing up the swimming pool in the old school the college operated as a community center and classroom building.

You get a very real sense of the health of a town's body politic when you go to their council meeting asking for money. Sometimes you sit for hours listening to council members bicker while you wait for your item to come up on the agenda. Sometimes a town council will tell you no without giving you any reason. Often you're viewed with suspicion, either because you're a relative stranger or because they know you're there to ask for money—no matter how worthy the cause. (A swimming pool, when there's a bay, ocean and several rivers nearby to drown in would seem a mom and apple pie issue—but not always.)

Going to the Nehalem City Council meeting was, however, different from all the rest. At the beginning of the meeting, Lee would ask each person in the audience to introduce themselves and indicate what they were interested in talking about that night. He'd even do this in the middle of the meeting when someone arrived late. Lee made you feel that each person was important and their concerns were worthwhile.

Lee carried this tradition into a big town hall meeting about a controversial highway project. Although the proposed passing lane up the south side of Neahkahnie Mountain would have had the most impact on the town of Manzanita, the council there didn't have the chutzpah to take a leadership role in discussing the positive and negative impacts on the small businesses, residences and forest environment adjacent to the project. But the Chamber of Commerce did, and Lee was the president.

About 150 people showed up at the cavernous Nehalem Fire Hall to hear the highway department officials explain the project, ask them questions and make comments. At the beginning of the meeting, Lee had each person, all 150, stand up and introduce him or herself. As the identities flowed around the room, a strange and positive feeling emerged: People whose names I'd heard before but never met were no longer anonymous; the good old boys leaning against the back wall were the brothers who ran the gravel operation; farmers whose dairies I'd driven by now had faces to go with names. We were no longer strangers from three little towns and the Nehalem Valley. We were a community coming together with diverse views and contentions, but all people recognized as individuals with the same standing.

There are lots of other stories I could tell about Lee Dillard and the leadership he's brought to life situations, his integrity, kindness, hard work, and generosity. Mainly I'd say he's a great example of the difference one person can make. And, I should mention—he's a Republican.

Victoria Stoppello writes from Ilwaco, at the lower left corner of Washington State.

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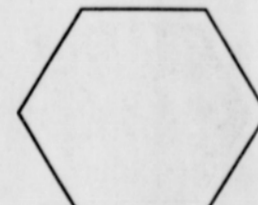
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Abstainer, n. A weak person who yields to the temptation of denying himself a pleasure. —Ambrose Bierce, American author (1842-1914?)

UPPER LEFT EDGE JULY 2001

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