

Home/Garden

Grab your calendar, the fairs are coming

Our annual town fair is a major marker of our year. Like any fair it provides entertainment and the sale of goods — and many booths were set up for the benefit of our local public institutions. We were a part of the Friends of the Library Book and Bake Sale.

Opening day dawned fair and sunny with no sign of the ominous clouds that opened and drenched last year's Fair. No matter, my husband and I dragged out our old tent and after consulting with Harry, set it up on the midway. This year we provided shade instead of shelter for all the readers who came to browse and buy books and goodies to benefit the Heath Library.

Further up the midway you could visit the volunteer fireman's booth where you could wet your whistle with their homemade root beer and be sure of getting a fair shake at the Wheel of Fortune even though Lady Luck proves herself as fair and fickle as ever. Actually, the Firemen were very busy — they also prepared the delicious chicken barbecue on Saturday and Sunday.

You could buy burgers, dogs and pie a la mode from the Agricultural Society, or watch the kiddie-beans try their luck at the Heath Preschool ball toss.

A fair means competition and there were competitions for every taste. You can always count on the cattle and sheep showings. The animals are clean and fair, brushed, combed and carded, exhibiting their best fair manners. The horse draw and ox draw attract big crowds, but this year there was a 4 x 4 pull, wood choppers racing to chop a beam the fastest or throw their axes most accurately.

The most chilling competition was the ice cream eating contest. How fast can a pint of ice cream be gob-

Pat Leuchtman



/Between The Rows

bled using a spoon. Judges stood by with extra spoons and watched to make sure everyone played fair and square.

Members of the fair sex guarded the entries in the Exhibit Hall. I checked to see how many ribbons my eggs, squash, cake and cookies won and then went on to admire the fair blossoms, without blemish or insect bite, as well as displays of leaves, weeds, wildflowers and bugs, collected on fair summer days in the Heath hills.

Before I left the fairground on Sunday, I bought a fairing for my love, a T-shirt printed with a giant blue ribbon that proclaimed him a First Prize Person. There were a lot of First Prize Persons wandering up and down the midway, under the fairest and hottest skies I've ever experienced at the Heath Fair. But that was no surprise. It takes a lot of First Prize People working together to make a First Prize Fair.

Actually, that's what it takes to make a First Prize Community.

A reader writes that he had a new lawn planted over his newly installed septic system and has been struggling with it all summer. The new grass came up green and fine, but then an area of grass about four by six feet, right over his new septic tank shriveled up and died. "Why?" he asked.

It turns out that when the yard was graded only six inches of soil was spread over the septic tank. This is good when you have trouble



Recorder/Lucia Russom

and need to get access to that tank, but it's not good for the grass. Grass roots need a cool moist soil to thrive; nothing will kill them faster than heat and drought. This summer has been hot and dry anyway, but with only six inches of soil over a cement cover, those conditions will rarely be

any different.

Short of spreading another six inches of soil in that area and ending up with a hump in the middle of the lawn, there are a couple of alternatives. First, you could plant a ground cover in that area.

This summer I planted a variety

of fragrant thymes on a dry sunny bank to eliminate lawn growing there. Many thyme varieties are very low growing and they are all tolerant of heat and drought. Thyme could meld with the lawn with no sharp demarcation.

Lamium maculatum is a low

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spreading ground cover with a strong growth habit. Several varieties are available. Beacon Silver has silvery leaves with green edges as does White Nancy. Lamium can adapt to dry conditions and will tolerate shade.

Another attractive ground cover that will adapt to almost any conditions is Arabis procurrens. It spreads quickly into a mat of shiny green leaves and produces white flowers in April and May.

Second, you could frame that area in and create a raised bed to be planted with any annuals or perennials you choose.

Garden calendar