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Off the Bookshelf

Linfield Magazine Staff

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In the fall, the leaves are all-consuming, all day every day. Rain is not a reason to slow down,” she says. We begin at the President’s House, the electric pump humming from her cart as she guides the watering wagon from basket to basket, then stops abruptly to pluck a well-hidden bud worm from a flower. “This little bugger will eat the blooms,” she says. While I admire the sweet violets, zinnias, vinca minor and other flowers lining the curved beds of the president’s yard, Gallagher looks beyond the beauty and sighs: “I haven’t been able to get to these beds yet,” she says. “There is not enough time.”

Near Pioneer Hall, we pass a young triangle-shaped bed with a fuchsia-colored crepe myrtle surrounded by sword ferns, creeping phlox, mini-rhododendrons, sweet violets and alium. Gallagher tells me she planned the bed with the help of her husband, Ken, a former landscape designer, to replace an overgrown spruce tree and heather. “The tree was too big and we took it out a few years ago and…” her voice trails off mid-sentence as she leaps from the driver’s seat and nabs a tiny slug making its way up a fern leaf. She pulls two weeds on her way into her cart, a 2006 Vantage. The two-way radio crackles with color – zinnias, marigolds, delphiniums, begonias, ferns and rhodies to go with the crepe myrtle, and chose the colors to go with the old-fashioned feel of the building.”

Gallagher constantly sees things I do not notice – slugs, bugs and garbage – and deftly scoops them up with a shovel or gloved hand. Her collection so far this year includes slugs, bugs and garbage – and deftly scoops them up with a shovel or gloved hand. Her collection so far this year includes slugs, bugs and garbage – and deftly scoops them up with a shovel or gloved hand.

“Take an Excedrin and eat a Snickers bar, and you can go far,” she says with a laugh. “That’s what’s kept me going all these years.” As we edge, I learn the difference between hard edges (sidewalks) and soft edges (flower beds, trees). She also explains noise restrictions. During the academic year, she has a two-hour window each Wednesday afternoon to mow, edge and blow the academic quad, a task that can only be accomplished with the help of co-workers. Near residence halls, she limits her work to after 9 a.m.

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“I have to work fast to get my lawns done in the allotted time,” she explains, and I note the pride and ownership of her statement, typical of the Linfield ethos. Throughout the day, she refers to “my” flowerbeds, “my” baskets and “my” shrubs. At the end of the afternoon, inspired and tired, my head swimming with gardening tips, I dig out the most well-hidden bud worm from a flower. “This little bugger will eat the blooms,” she says.

Gene Davis finds that his plants are always alive with life right into the winter. This is the second edition of the book, which addresses the history and growth of the casino industry, and incorporates new games and new technology.

Laura Davis, left, assistant director of communications, helps Carol Gallagher weed the flower bed south of Northup Hall in the academic quad. To get a feel for what it takes to maintain Linfield’s beautiful campus, Davis spent a day working side-by-side with Gallagher.

“I love the work,” says Gallagher, who began gardening at 10 with her dad, making 10 cents an hour. “It’s creative and I get a lot of exercise. I like the satisfaction of doing a job and looking back at it. My favorite part of the job is working with and getting to know the students.”

There is plenty of heavy work – bending, pushing, lifting, clipping, haul ing. Today, we hoist hefty buckets of debris from under a fir tree into the back of her truck. Tomorrow, she will be lifting something else. Her advice for a quick pick-me-up? Take an Excedrin and eat a Snickers bar, and you can go far,” she says with a laugh. “That’s what’s kept me going all these years.”

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At the end of the afternoon, inspired and tired, my head swimming with gardening tips, I dig out the most important pearl of wisdom and head to the bookstore for a Snickers bar. Now that’s what I call gardening.

– Laura Davis