Laura Davis, left, assistant director of communications, helps Carol Gallagher weed the flower bed south of Hoehn 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.

Snowy, we’re shoveling snow.

That just the way Gallagher likes it. She much prefers being outdoors to indoors, no matter the weather.

“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, hauling. Today, we hoist hefty buckets of debris from under a fern into the back of her truck. Tomorrow, she will be lifting something else. Her advice for a quick pick-me-up?

“Take an Excursion 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.

“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 important pearl of wisdom and head to the bookstore for a Snickers bar. Now that’s what I call gardening.