About the Owners
Paul, an avid outdoorsman and hunter, recently retired from a career as a commodities trader. Vickie worked in the hospitality industry but has since pursued gardening and natural healing. In addition to being a Marais des Cygnes Extension Master Gardener since 2008, she has taken extensive coursework in meditation and in using herbal compounds and teas for relief of physical and emotional conditions. She is a CNHP (Certified Natural Health Professional) with an apothecary onsite for compounding remedies. Otherwise, the family consists of a menagerie of cats and dogs, goats and peafowl, chickens and ducks. Bee hives produce honey for friends, family and compounding.

About the Garden
The entrance via a wooded drive with a view of the lake introduces the visitor to Orange Moon and the sound of a large central fountain establishes a sense of serenity. To the south; an extensive set of raised beds produces vegetables, culinary and medicinal herbs, and berries. The 30 by 70-foot hoophouse in the front pasture extends the growing season for vegetables to year-round! Paths to the outhouses are lined with self-sowing annuals and native perennials to provide sustenance for the native pollinators and honey bees. “Weeds” are valued for their nectar; even the humble dandelion garners respect as one of the first springtime food sources for bees.

Special Features
Vickie loves hosting friends and holds frequent get-togethers, where guests find a calming energy in the natural, native landscape. Landscaping for relaxing and entertaining also take priority, with a gazebo, outdoor kitchen and space for gatherings of large groups. Extensive hardscaping and garden art (look for the praying mantis!) provide structure and humor. The lakefront is lined with Adirondack chairs overseeing the floating duck house. In addition to the charming house, there are two chicken coops, a corn crib converted to peafowl housing and a goat barn. And of course, a large shed for Paul’s “boy toys.” Every country man needs a tractor, or two.

Vickie’s Favorite Plants
- Passion Vine, host plant for Variegated Fritillary butterfly caterpillars and the fruit makes a refreshing drink high in Vitamin C
- Pipevine, the sole host plant for Pipevine Swallowtail caterpillars
- Tithonia, large orange flowers that are favorites of the fall migrating Monarchs
- Stinging nettles, from which she makes a nettle soup tonic
- Echinacea, so useful as in an immunity boosting tea
- Holy basil, great for stress relief and relaxation
- Lemon Balm, a gentle calming herb, promotes longevity
- Purple Castor Bean for tropical opulence
- Purple hyacinth bean vine, an ornamental that provides a great splash of color through the fall
- Harry Lauder Walking Stick (AKA Contorted Filbert)

Greatest Challenges
Living with Mother Nature sounds romantic but she is often not easy to live with. Fortunately the two large dogs roam the property at night and provide predator protection to the livestock while preventing rodents, rabbits and deer from demolishing the gardens.
Using Herbs and Spices for Health

The terms herb and spice are often interchanged, but they made from different sections of plants and processed in different ways. In culinary or cooking terms, the edible, green or leafy part of a plant is generally referred to as an herb, while the other parts (such as the aromatic buds, bark, root, berries, or seeds) are termed spices (which are often dried). Herbs and other botanicals have played a key role in human health for centuries. Do herbs and spices actually offer health benefits?

Currently, herbs are applied medicinally in the treatment of chronic and acute conditions and various ailments and problems such as cardiovascular disease, prostate problems, depression, inflammation, and to boost the immune system. There are more than 100 common spices used in cooking around the globe. Studies have shown that spices are concentrated sources of naturally occurring substances that protect cells from damage. Many of the health benefits recognized from herbs and spices, are summarized below:

Antioxidants — Substances in many spices and herbs that slow or prevent damage to cells; help our bodies fight off chronic diseases; and promote healthy cell aging.

Anti-Inflammatory — These compounds fight against inflammation, which may show up in our bodies as joint stiffness and pain or fever. Inflammation occurs when the body “over-responds” to an infection; inflammation is linked to type 2 diabetes, Alzheimer’s disease, and certain cancers. As an example, research has shown that the spice turmeric, which contains curcumin, is effective in reducing the pain and swelling related to some types of arthritis.

Antibacterial, antifungal, and anti-fungal — These compounds slow or inhibit the growth of foodborne bacteria and other substances making food unsafe. Some herbs and spices, such as clove, oregano, thyme, cinnamon, and cumin, have shown significant antibacterial and antifungal activities against food spoilage.

Antiemetic and anti-nausea — Ginger is an ancient herb used widely in history for its many natural medicinal properties and particularly as an antiemetic agent — something that prevents vomiting. Others with anti-nausea properties are chamomile and peppermint.

Storage of herbs and spices

Spices are judged by its color and aroma. When fresh, most spices have a bright, rich color and a strong aroma. Always purchase in small quantities to help ensure freshness. Keep spices tightly covered and store them in a dark, cool, dry place. Whole spices stay fresh for up to 2 years, while ground spices have a 6-month shelf life. Store red spices, such as paprika and red pepper, in the refrigerator. They will hold their color and keep their flavor longer.

Dried herbs are stored in the same way as spices. Dried whole herbs generally last longer than ground herbs. They can be stored as is and ground as needed. The flavors will stay fresher and stronger this way. Make sure your dried herbs are completely free of any moisture. A good way of checking for any moisture is to rub a bit of these herbs in between your fingers. If the herbs crumble easily, they are dried. Store dried herbs in an airtight dark container so that exposure to light and air does not spoil them. Glass bottles are preferable to plastic for preserving flavor. Store them in a dark, dry place. Sunlight may ruin the potency of the herbs. To extend their life, store herbs in a cool and dry place. Do not keep the containers near your stove — the heat and moisture from cooking will shorten their “lifespan.”

Fresh herbs are best stored in the refrigerator. Before storing, it is important to thoroughly rinse the entire bunch under cold water and dry well by patting dry with paper towels. Delicate herbs like parsley, cilantro, and mint should be carefully stored in the refrigerator Robot. Harder herbs like rosemary, thyme, and sage should be wrapped loosely in a damp paper towel. Store the bundle in an airtight container or zip-type plastic bag in the crisper drawer. The paper towel will keep the herbs moist enough to prevent drying and the bag or container keeps out the oxygen so they stay fresh longer.

Grow your own herbs

Many herbalists like to grow their own fresh herbs in pots or plots right outside the kitchen. For more information on tips and techniques for growing your own herbs, see this KSRE publication: bookstore.kses.ksu.edu/pubs/ MF2579.pdf

There are many reasons to include more herbs and spices in your daily life, and great flavors and health benefits are just the beginning. Enjoy!

Orange Moon Apothecary & Farm

Paul & Vickie Vetter-Scruggs – Paola, Kansas

“We might think we are nurturing our garden, but of course, it’s our garden that is really nurturing us.” – Jerry Uglow

“Healing Sanctuary.” That’s how Vickie Vetter-Scruggs describes Orange Moon, the 80 timbered acres where she and her husband Paul have made their home since 2010. The house was originally the Wellsville Train Depot, which was built in 1870, moved to the property in 1989 and then renovated to become a spacious home. The emphasis is on health, starting with stewardship of the land. No pesticides are used and the property is certified as a pollinator garden and butterfly garden. Many of the flower beds contain medicinal herbs for healing physical maladies. To enhance emotional health, meditation sites are scattered throughout the natural woods and meadows. Frequently scheduled workshops and retreats bring others to Orange Moon to immerse themselves in the healing environment.

A September to Remember

September 8th & 9th, 2023

Marais des Cygnes Extension District Master Gardeners Garden Tour

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