

## Appreciation of nature

For centuries there have been few people on the earth who loved, appreciated and respected nature more than the people of Japan. The Shinto religion, Japan's oldest religion and one of two major religions in Japan today, is basically a combination of ancestor and nature worship. The appreciation of nature may not be as strong today as it was a few decades ago, but it's still strong.

I recently watched a movie titled "The Last Samurai" in which Tom Cruise played the role of a U.S. military officer in the mid-1800s. That officer was hired by the government of Japan to go to Japan and teach the army of the Imperial government western military techniques to help overthrow an opposing army of samurai warriors. After a short period of training the Imperial army went into battle against his advice and he was wounded and captured.

He was nursed back to health in a remote mountain village where he observed the life of the samurai and in one scene, which is the scene I'll remember from the movie, he said to himself something to the effect that "I don't understand the culture and customs I've seen here, but the beauty, harmony and serenity of the place bring about a sense of reverence." There are many places in that small island nation where I've felt the same. But there are three places in particular which have been designated as Japan's "Three Great Views" that elicit that feeling.

A couple centuries ago after visiting these special places, and other places of significant beauty, some would try to emulate the scenes in miniature on their own property. These represented



Kameoka Corner

LARRY JONES

some of Japan's earliest "landscape gardens". Many, including myself, often describe Japanese landscape gardens as representing larger scenes in miniature. This is often, but not always, true. Some gardens are designed to have the opposite effect, to give the appearance of a much larger garden by using what is called "borrowed scenery", usually nearby, or even somewhat distant mountains. One such garden is Entsu-ji in north-east Kyoto.

On the east side of the relatively small stroll garden is a long well-trimmed hedge and beyond the hedge a grove of cypress trees with branches trimmed well up the trunks. The hedge and the trunks form a sort of frame and in that frame one sees Mt Hiei in the distance serving as borrowed scenery. At Ritsurin Garden, my favorite garden in Japan, the view across a large pond to mountains well beyond the actual boundary of the garden and what connects the garden to the mountains is the blue sky thus making the mountains and the sky as much a part of the garden as the pond.

Using borrowed scenery one can consider the garden to be as large as desired and nature's natural beauty and man-made beauty work together to create large and beautiful gardens where there's almost always exceptional beauty, harmony, serenity and a sense of reverence.

Larry Jones is a member of the Stillwater Sister Cities Council.



PROVIDED

Abhimanyu Sukhdial sits at his desk reading his first published novel.

## Local middle schooler wins first place in book contest

By Ashlynd Huffman  
ahuffman@stwnnewspress.com

Abhimanyu Sukhdial is 12-years-old and in the seventh grade. He has been a regular contributor to Stone Soup Magazine.

Stone Soup Magazine is written and illustrated by kids who are 8-13 years of age.

He said he plans to continue writing into adulthood.

"Yes, I've always loved reading books and I love the satisfaction of jotting down my stories on paper. For me, nothing beats that satisfaction and happiness," Sukhdial said.

He has written numerous things from video game reviews to movie reviews for Stone Soup Magazine.

"So, when they announced last summer they were going to have their first ever international book contest, I got super excited, and decided to go for it," Sukhdial said.

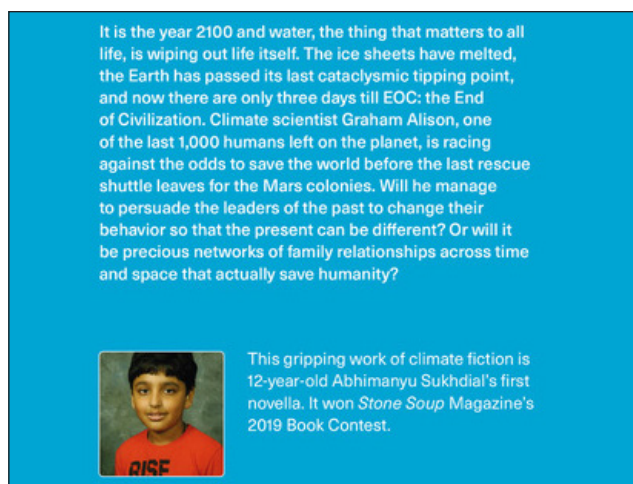
Participants could write a collection of poetry, short stories or a book as long as the word count was at least 4,000 words long.

Sukhdial's winning book is a fictional take on climate change. The book is called "Three Days till EOC."

### More online

An interview of Abhi Sukhdial, conducted by Stone Soup Magazine can be found at:

<https://youtu.be/-susnKavHLY>



PROVIDED

The back cover of "Three Days till EOC" showcases the description of Abhimanyu Sukhdial's fictional novel.

"My original idea for the book was not about climate change. I wanted to make it like an end-of-the-world disease kind of story ironic, huh," Sukhdial said. "But after a while, I realized that was too generic and I decided to focus it on climate

change because it is happening today in real life, meaning we can relate to it."

Sukhdial said he has always been interested in global warming, but he wanted his book to still have an "end of the world" feel to it.

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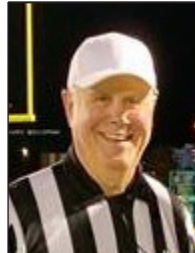
# Our town and memory lane

I truly LOVE Our Town! That fact certainly is no surprise to anyone who knows me. In fact, you could easily say I have a passion for promoting our little piece of planet Earth we live on in north central Oklahoma! Kind of a self-appointed good-will ambassador?

To demonstrate my affection for my hometown, I have narrated guided tours of the community, whether it be via a large school bus full of SHS alumni from years past in town for their high school reunion, or simply family or friends here for a visit with us. I puff up with pride as I drive out and about, explaining all I can about Our Town, past/present/future. It is really a passion of mine!

Last weekend, I was presented another opportunity to do this tour-guide, alter ego role, by driving Chad around our lovely city for a couple of beautiful Sunday afternoon hours. It was on this recent outing, I will share a past school experience, involving an often overlooked Stillwater icon.

I will chat about our own



Time Out

ROBERT BREEDLOVE

Booker T. Washington (BTW) public school, 619 West 12th Avenue; a structure that ceased its primary educational function in 1956. The building still stands today, although empty and unoccupied for many years.

BTW was a major part of my public school experience during my 7-9th grade education in Our Town, 1959-62. As I sat in my truck recently with Chad on the south side (behind the school's front facing north entrance) of the boarded-up, graffiti-painted old red brick structure, the memories flooded back into my head about my activities there, long, long ago. Many of you readers out there will think I am stretching re-

ality. as I tell you some of the forthcoming information about my experiences with BTW. Folks, these things really happened! Yes, they did!

For starters, a large number of junior high boys took physical education class at BTW during that previously mentioned time frame. The classes were conducted at the school, several blocks southwest of our main school buildings, which were located between West 10th and West 12th Avenue, and South Duck and South Duncan Streets. So, how were we, 12-year-olds in grade #7, expected to get from our main school campus to BTW? Yes, the correct answer is – WALK, every Monday thru Friday during the school year!

That would be walking in any kind of September-May unpredictable Oklahoma weather, westbound to and eastbound from BTW, on a poorly maintained blacktop (i.e., asphalt, not concrete) West 12th Avenue. With heavy rain, the street would be full of runoff water, and if the rain was really hard, the city sewer system

would overflow into the street and surrounding ditches. As I recall, there were no sidewalks for pedestrians to use. Also, walkers experienced the usual winter conditions; ice, sleet and/or snow, that covered the asphalt and surrounding land, making the walk interesting for sure??

The junior high girls, however, did not have these daily possible travel obstacles. Their PE classes were held on-site at our main school building..

Once inside BTW, my male classmates and I would change into our gym shorts and white T-shirts in our dressing room, located in the south section of the gym. After class, we would shower, and dress for our walk back up the street for our regular classroom instruction in the main building. Iconic PE teacher, Coach Floyd Caldwell, was our teacher for those 3 years, and he left SO many memories in my head! My dear friend and fellow newspaper columnist, John Pryor, recently wrote a piece about Coach Caldwell's influence on him, too. Coach Caldwell was a dominating

physical presence, and, also, had a BOOMING voice. He gave me the nickname "Birdseed" because I seemed to always be eating sunflower seeds around him. Right now, I can picture Coach in my mind's eye. timing us with his stop watch on the indoor rope climb. The rope was attached to the top of the gym. His classic spoken word was to yell "Mannnnn!!" at us, hoping we would improve our upper body strength on our frequent rope climbs during PE class.

Oh, my, the flood of personal memories of those three magical school years, 1959-62, with Coach Caldwell, BTW School, and my fellow male PE classmates. Certainly, these are utterly priceless thoughts!

Robert Breedlove is an Oklahoma State University news-editorial journalism graduate, and a former newspaper (including News Press) reporter. He resides in Stillwater, and has for most of his life. He has been a contributing writer to various media over the United States for years. He may be reached at [dermrefmd@aol.com](mailto:dermrefmd@aol.com).



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## Nature/Gardens

## The changing of the robust renegades

After returning to Oklahoma after the moose, black bear, and oppressive heat of the north (yes, you read that correctly), writer was ready to get down to more fall birding. Being armed with enough knowledge on what to expect in the South and when, the weather had to be just right. After seeing deep cracks in the ground, it was obvious that a good rain and medium winds from the north would be what we were all waiting for. It didn't take long.

Wednesday the 9th of September was the day that we all had been waiting for. Shortly after most of the rain, it was time to ride, or in my case, rapidly respond to Boomer Lake to see what shorebirds I had claimed would be late this fall, and there was no disappointment.

For those of you that recall the spring that Shorebird Jetty was covered in water a couple of

Life at  
Boomer  
Lake

DEB HIRT

years ago, it wasn't quite that good, but it was very impressive. Winds were moderate out of the north and the barometer was rising. It was no great shakes for songbirds, but that was to be expected, as the meat-and-potatoes would be the shorebirds.

On the way, Heron Cove provided Yellow Warblers and a beautiful example of a single unexpected Orange-crowned Warbler. It was time for the kill.

Every 10 minutes, the cast of characters changed, so that meant that we were all on high alert. Synchronizing our watches, our imminent arrival gave us a couple



DEB HIRT

## Summer Tanager.

of waves of Blue-winged Teal that circled the lake several times and the crescendo only increased. Along the south edge of Shorebird Jetty were several Great Egrets that flanked a lone Cattle Egret. Spotted Sandpipers gave their peet-weet-weet call as they took to the air along with nearly

every swallow that could migrate, except the Northern Rough-winged Swallow. They were on a different channel. Then the Killdeer descended upon the two resting Turkey Vultures, who took off like Valkyries.

Several Franklin's Gulls flew back and forth until it was time to rest

and show off their breeding plumage. There had also been sightings earlier in the day of the Black and Forester's Terns, several Pied-billed Grebes, the Bald Eagle, and Red-winged Blackbirds. There were more herons than you'd seen prior to that day.

Lake Carl Blackwell

had a single Ruby-throated Hummingbird that couldn't have been too far from torpor, Caspian, Black, and Forster's Terns, multiple Ospreys, Mississippi Kite, Cooper's Hawk, a Belted Kingfisher dressed for success, as well as Baltimore Oriole, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Chipping Sparrow, Eastern Bluebirds, Yellow, Pine, and Yellow-throated Warblers, Summer Tanagers, and migratory Purple Martins.

The following day with more rain it was more of the same, and of course, the robust renegades changed to some degree. It was all good while it lasted. While the unsettled weather is with us, we shall trumpet the results once again for the next wave of migrants.

Keep your eyes on the ground and your head in the clouds. Happy birding!

*Deb Hirt is a wild bird rehabilitator and photographer living in Stillwater.*

## Combating issues dealing with poorly drained soil

No matter how green your thumb is, gardening will likely be a struggle for gardeners dealing with poorly drained soil.

For some landscapes, the simple addition of organic matter will address many of the problems associated with the soil. However, some issues can't be fixed in this manner. Areas where water often drains that are low, have poor soil or sit at the end of a slope are more likely to have



## Grow!

DAVID HILLOCK

problem spots associated with poor drainage.

In many urban sites, the upper 8 inches or so of the soil are in very good condition from years of compost and organic matter inputs,

but when digging deeper, we find compacted clay subsoil. This subsoil has very poor drainage, and more often than not, plants often struggle to survive in these locations.

Sometimes, affordable options for maintaining these areas can be limited. Excavating the soil to 18 to 24 inches is one method, but this process isn't cheap, and in some cases, can create even more problems. This solution also is a no-go

in areas featuring established trees and shrubs.

Another option is a sub-surface drainage pipe, also known as a French drain, that is installed to help pull excess water away from problem areas. Again, this comes at an expense. An easier and less costly fix that will work in some cases is simply installing raised beds. Gardeners also can reduce water issues through careful irrigation management.

The easiest option for poor water drainage is to install plants that don't mind having wet feet. Consider trees such as deciduous holly, red buckeye, river birch, bald cypress and black gum.

Shrubs that do well in wet areas include chokeberry, summersweet, buttonbush and wax-myrtle.

Homeowners who need a good turfgrass that can withstand poor drainage should consider

switchgrass, inland sea oats, feather reed grass, prairie dropseed and sedges. Fill flower beds with perennials including yarrow, beebalm, milkweed, ironweed and New England Aster.

Be sure to check with your local Oklahoma State University Extension office for more gardening tips. Click on County Offices.

*David Hillock is a consumer horticulturist with OSU cooperative extension.*

"Well, I ended up writing about 70 pages, or around 17,000 words! It took a lot of effort, but I won the contest, and that's how I got my book published."

Abhimanyu Sukhdial

## Book

Continued from Page C1

"What I most love about writing is developing the idea. Sometimes, I might be playing video games or eating dinner, and I will get an idea. I have a Microsoft Word document on my laptop with just tons and tons of ideas. That's my favorite part," Sukhdial said.

Sukhdial had his idea, now all he had to do was compile the ideas into a book.

He spent three months working on his book while he was in India with his grandparents.

"While it may seem complicated, the process of writing a book isn't that difficult to understand. You just need a lot of patience, an idea, and you're all set," Sukhdial said. "That doesn't mean it's easy, though. It's very challenging and requires a lot of writing and revising, and that's exactly what I did."

He said he spent many days on his bed revising his book. Through a lot of patience he was able to fully complete his first book.

"Well, I ended up writing about 70 pages, or around 17,000 words! It took a lot of effort, but I won the contest, and that's how I got my book published," Sukhdial said.

Sukhdial is proud of the hard work and effort it took to complete his book. He said climate change is real

and can be relatable.

To make it interesting, he added in sci-fi elements to make it entertaining to his audience.

"I am proud of the sci-fi elements I put in the story like the PEN (Planet Earth Network) and a time machine. Those were my favorite parts because they felt original and unique to me, and I love incorporating different elements in my stories to make them feel different and unique," Sukhdial said.

Anu Sukhdial said her son started writing in the second grade. Every year, he submitted his writing to the PTA Reflections Program.

"We are really thankful for the wonderful SPS teachers Abhi has had over the years who encouraged him to keep reading and writing, and for creative platforms like the PTA Reflections program and Stone Soup. All these taken together gave Abhi the confidence and perseverance to write and complete his first ever book, Three Days Till EOC," Anu said.

"Three Days till EOC" can be purchased through Amazon, Barnes and Noble and the online Stone Soup Store.

Local bookstore Bliss Books & Bindery ordered copies of the book to sell.

"I thought we should also support local during these challenging times," Anu said.

Contact them at 405-332-5653 about pre-ordering a copy.

## Some gardeners in a pickle over scarce canning supplies

Associated Press

MARSHFIELD, Vt. — It's the time of year when gardeners are turning their ripe tomatoes into sauces and salsas and cucumbers into pickles. But a boom in gardening and preparing food at home during the coronavirus pandemic has led to a scarcity of supplies with which to preserve them.

From Maine to Vermont to Louisiana and West Virginia, gardeners have reported being in a pickle when it comes to finding certain sized glass jars, the special lids to safely seal them, or the bands with which to screw them on. They've gone from store to store and some have given in to paying higher prices online for certain precious so-called canning supplies.

"We have been everywhere," said Vanessa Ware of Hurricane, West Virginia, who said she went to at least a half-dozen stores after

running out of supplies for her tomatoes, peppers, corn and sauerkraut canning. She still had enough leftover jars and lids but not the bands, so she started looking — and looking. And a search of online retail sites proved to be frustrating due to price gouging.

The entire canning industry has seen an unprecedented demand for supplies as more consumers prepare meals at home during the pandemic, said a spokesperson for Newell Brands, owner of Ball, which produces Mason jars and other supplies.

"The demand has resulted in supply constraints, extended lead times and recently limited product availability at stores and online," the spokesperson said. To replenish the stock as quickly as possible, the company said it's increased glass production, found additional lid manufacturers and expanded its pack out

locations.

The scarcity didn't surprise Elizabeth Andress, project director for the National Center for Home Food Preservation.

"There seem to be more people canning than ever before -- from the much higher number of inquiries coming into the National Center for help than in the past, and from the large number of participants I hear are attending virtual food preservation classes that Extension educators around the country have been offering," said Andress, a professor and Extension food safety specialist at the University of Georgia.

More people put in gardens or expanded their existing plots this spring out of initial fears of a possible food shortage or apprehension about going to the grocery store during the pandemic.

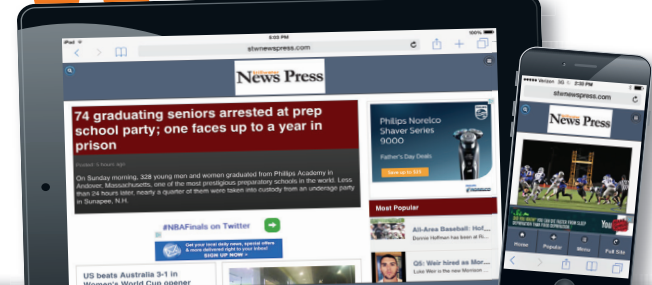
The master garden helpline at the Uni-

versity of Vermont Extension has received more than 500 emails and phone calls since mid-March from new gardeners, those who are expanding their gardens or seeking help with plant disease issues, a jump from previous years, said Lisa Chouinard, the helpline assistant.

"I do believe this is due to COVID as more people are wanting to grow their own food, as well as provide food for those who are in need," she said by email.

Ware, in West Virginia, was finally able to find some bands for her canning. Her mother-in-law, two hours away, brought them to her. She's since been able to get more, but only after paying extra because the bands were sold in a package of 12 with the jars and lids, which she didn't need.

"We don't need all those jars when we already had them," she said.

Good to the Last  
WORD

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