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It is difficult to think anything but pleasant thoughts while eating a home-grown tomato.
L. Grizzard



Photo by Mary Reilly-Kliss



The Best Dirt

A Publication of the
Ozaukee County Master Gardeners
Port Washington, Wisconsin
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KUDOS CORNER Ozaukee County Master Gardeners, Front and Center for Plant Sale, Garden Tour, Magazine Feature

From Melissa Rasmussen:



Have you heard? The Ozaukee Master Gardeners do an amazing job selling herbs and Heirlooms! Our 2013 Heirloom Plant and Herb Sale was quite the success. The plants looked beautiful; every table had a

stunning collection. Our customers couldn't resist the plants, the garden treasures, or the 'treats'. We sold out of almost all of our plants this year and that means 'profit'. We met all of our goals: The community got an opportunity to learn more about our organization and we got a chance to work together as a team on a very successful project. We will be getting together in September to talk about it and plan for 2014. Watch



some of their spouses volunteered to assist with the Port Washington Historical Society's fundraiser, *Spring in Bloom* garden tour of the gardens and property at Afterglow Glow Farm. Volunteers did everything including identifying plants, toting water, assisting guests, directing traffic, managing wildlife (although hopefully no turtles or snakes met their demise due to the traffic congestion), selling tickets and even towing cars. Over 1600 people attended the garden walk and the society raised over \$16,000. The event was not without its share of issues, as far more people attended than were anticipated and the rain the night before

caused considerable parking issues, but in the end each and every volunteer from the Ozaukee Master Gardeners handled themselves with dignity and professionalism. The Society would like to thank all those who helped. Without the OMGs the event could not have happened. If you were a volunteer, the Port Washington Historical Society takes its collective hat off to you. Special thanks go to Dan O'Neil for permitting the members to volunteer and to accumulate work hours for this very successful community fundraiser.

From Jean Schanen and Heidi Janous:

On Sunday, June 16th more than 30 Ozaukee Master Gardeners and



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Our own **Kathleen Awe's** gardens are featured in the current issue of *Wisconsin Gardening* magazine. This publication is well worth a read not only for this article, but for other information about gardening in our state.



LASATA FIELD TRIP TO THE MILWAUKEE DOMES



Photos and Article by
Cindy Herman, OMG Volunteer

July 11 was a beautiful sunny day. Judy O'Connell had planned a trip to the Mitchell Park Domes for a group of the Lasata residents. There were about 20 of us including the aides and volunteers to help the residents. The school bus was all loaded and ready to go about 9:45 in the morning. When we got to the Domes we were anxious to get out and enjoy the plants.



Our first Dome was the Tropical Forest Dome. As you would expect, it was warm and humid with the aroma of vegetation and moist soil. It reminded me of fresh compost. This Dome has over 450 species of tropical plants in a small area of less than 15,000 sq feet. You can find orchids, lush foliage, many with giant leaves, palms, as well as a nice waterfall that leads to a pond for the fish! If you decide to visit the Domes don't forget to look up! The tall majestic trees have some beautiful flowers and fruit. Although I did not see them, I heard there are birds as well that live here. The sausage tree was interesting.



Our last Dome to visit was the seasonal one that changes with the different events. The theme when we visited was Milwaukee backyard gardens. The dusty miller and petunias were full and vibrant.

Our second dome was the Desert Dome. The atmosphere was warm and dry. Represented in this Dome is America's southwest, Mexico, South America, Africa, and Madagascar. The Desert Dome features a word class collection of cacti and succulents which thrive in a natural setting complete with grasses and palms. They even offer some endangered and unusual plants for your viewing but "no touching" signs are included. The golden barrel cactus and blooming bougainvillea were just beautiful. The elephant tree and *alluaudia* were something to see too. One would wonder how a plant that looks so dry can even survive. The growing medium had a lot of rocks and sand. I couldn't help think about our Master Gardener program on succulents. I saw a lot of the same plants in the Desert Dome that were presented in the program. His pots too were mostly small rocks and gravel.



After a resident group photo we had a box lunch, courtesy of Lasata. No one was ready to go back home yet so we wandered around outside soaking up the sunshine. They are constructing a new HUGE green house to grow the plants for the displays. Wouldn't it be fun to have one of those! We all had a wonderful time and enjoyed the beautiful day. It was so

good to bring some pleasure to the residents and give them some time away. Without volunteers, trips like this could not be possible. Thanks to all our volunteers!! Be proud to be an OMGV.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

OMG Monthly Meeting

Topics:

- September**, Shawn Graft, *Forest Beach Migratory Preserve*
- October**, Pat Wilborn, *The Future of Local Aquaponics*
- November**: NO MEETING
- December** (first Thursday), TBA: Hands On Workshop.

Vegetable Garden Tasks for September:

Week 1

- Remove newly set tomato blossoms and growing tips because the fruit won't have time to mature.
- Remove all weeds and diseased plant material, including vines and tomato plants.

Week 2:

- Pinch out the growing tips on Brussels sprouts so that the set fruits will reach maturity and remove bottom leaves as they yellow and wilt.
- If frost is predicted, cover crops which you want to save.
- Continue to dig potatoes, harvesting as foliage dies off.

Week 3: Dig and pot herbs and transfer to pots for indoor use.

Week 4: Harvest carrots, beets, and turnips. Parsnips could stay in the ground over winter as they sweeten with frost.

PLANT RECOMMENDATIONS

Grafted Tomatoes

Text and Photographs by Sharon Poehlman



Amish Paste tomato from grafted plant.

Being the ever curious gardener, I chose to purchase 2 very expensive tomato seedlings this spring. Yup, grafted tomatoes!

I placed my order with Vermont Bean Seed Company in January, and received the tomato plants May 3rd. I was very, very skeptical when I received these little darlings because they were so frail and fragile. After transplanting them very carefully into 3" pots and placing them in my little 6x8 greenhouse next to the tomatoes I had grown from seed, I began to feel remorse for spending almost \$8.00 apiece for these including shipping and handling.



The tomato plant on the right is a regular Amish Paste, on the left is the grafted Amish Paste. In the first two weeks of August, Sharon picked 12 tomatoes from the grafted plant, and 3 from the regular.

It took them a couple of weeks, but then they began to thrive; almost catching up to my own seedlings. To make this test fair, I bought an Amish Paste tomato plant from a nursery. It measured about the same size as the "now thriving" grafted tomatoes. On June 8th, everyone got transplanted into the garden.

Now, side by side they grow, and so far I'm pleasantly surprised! The grafted Amish Paste tomatoes are really outperforming the non-grafted. All three plants have a base stem of 1 1/4 inch. Their height differs slightly, with the grafted being about 5 inches taller. And, as advertised, the grafted plants have almost twice the fruit!

On August 1st the non-grafted tomatoes were weeks from ripening, but I picked my first Amish Paste tomato from the grafted plant. I guess my little test has made me a believer. I still love my heirlooms, and I'll continue to grow them from seeds but I will seek out these grafted plants at the local nurseries next season.

After listening to Nino Ridgeway talk about heirloom tomatoes I was inspired to try "Silvery Fir Tree" and "Sungold", which isn't an heirloom but wow, what a great tasting cherry tomato! And what's in a name anyway? "Silvery Fir Tree" is recommended for containers and it is not disappointing me. I picked 7 tomatoes already! And they are delicious! Weird name though...



Clematis "Mrs Robert Brydon"

Photo and Article by Mary Reilly-Kliss

If you are looking for a stunning plant for your landscape, do consider the "Mrs Robert Brydon" clematis, a basically carefree specimen which does well growing on a trellis, arbor, or climbing through shrubs and on the ground.



Our plant has been in place on the south side of our garage for five or six years, and was a slow starter. However, in the past three years it has literally "taken over".



This spring I cut it back severely, but it has recovered mightily, reaching somewhere around 10 feet tall, necessitating a step ladder to tie it up over the growing season. It blooms late in August, and the pale blue, bee-attracting flowers are lightly scented.

If I were to divide it, I would do so in spring, but the recovery could take a couple of years. I don't think I will risk it!

-30-

"-30-" was the traditional way for journalists to mark the end of a story "back in the day" before computers became the way in which stories were filed. In that vein, this issue marks my last as editor of *The Best Dirt*. I have deeply enjoyed this job for five years and cannot thank you enough for the great articles which you have sent my way. I now find myself needing to pass the job along to the new editor who is waiting in the wings. Find out who it is in the next issue!

Mary Reilly-Kliss

On The Road To . . .

Blithewold Mansion, Gardens, & Arboretum

Bristol, Rhode Island

Article and Photos by
Mary Reilly-Kliss

For special events such as “significant” birthdays and anniversaries, my husband, David, and I make the practice of “giving” each other gifts which the giver as well as the recipient would enjoy. Thus, with a “significant birthday” on the horizon for David, I decided that a trip to Newport, Rhode Island for the opening night of the Newport Jazz Fest would be enjoyed by both of us.



Blithewold Mansion



Narragansett Bay as seen from North Garden.

As we had hoped, the mansions were superb, the music outstanding, lobster rolls quite tasty, and the people-watching entertaining. However, one of our favorite things was not part of the original plan and came about because a gardening friend recommended that we visit Blithewold Mansion in Bristol, Rhode Island.

The Blithewold property, including stables, boathouses on Narragansett Bay, a mansion and greenhouses, was developed in the early 1900’s. A fire in 1906 resulted in the re-building of the original home, and family members with deep interests in horticulture established botanical gardens and an arboretum in the generations to come. When the last family member died in 1976, the property was bequeathed to the public for perpetuity.



Giant Sequoia
Sequoiadendron Giganteum

The zone hardiness for the area is in the 6a-6b range, so we observed some plant and tree species which are not suited for our 4b-5a growing conditions such as Giant Sequoias (*Sequoiadendron giganteum*). In addition, the acidic soils found naturally in the state create optimum growing conditions for many conifers, rhododendrons, and my personal addiction, hydrangeas. The sizes of the rhododendrons and naturally-occurring deep blue hues of the hydrangeas were absolutely stunning.



Bigleaf Hydrangea
Hydrangea Macrophylla
“Blue Wave”

Each tree or shrub had an accompanying tag noting the plant name and date planted, the latter being very helpful so as to know how large a tree could be in the future.



Water garden featuring stunning Japanese Maple.



Holy Rhododendron!

In addition to the shrub and tree plantings, the gardens include a water garden, bog, woodland garden, vegetable garden, many container plantings, grape arbors, and a massive lawn leading to Narragansett Bay.



Pitcher Plant and detail of same grown in water garden containers.



David, seated on our idea of the Perfectly sized lawn.



Yours truly standing "in" a Weeping European Beech *Fagus Sylvatica* "Pendula".



Entrance to The Bosquet, or Woodland Garden.

The University of Rhode Island Master Gardener Association produced an informative brochure for the site which maps plant specimens and includes growing conditions. Some of the most interesting trees are, indeed, hardy here in Wisconsin, and we hope to plant one or two on our property.

In addition to the grounds, the mansion is also open for touring. However, since we had received our fill of mansions in Newport, we passed on that and spent our all too short two hours strolling the grounds, snapping photos, and gazing with no small amount of envy at what gardeners living in Zone 6 and next to the ocean can grow.



Great Idea!



Harlequin Glorybower (*Clerodendrum trichotomum*) and detail of same in full, highly scented bloom.

Should you have a chance to visit Rhode Island, do make a stop at the Blithewold Mansion, Gardens and Arboretum, (www.blithewold.org). You will not be disappointed.



Seating areas under pergolas are enhanced by wonderful container plantings filled with annuals and small trees such as the "Summer Gold" Japanese Maple in the background of this picture.



"Interior photo" of a Sargent's Weeping Hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis pendula*). Planted in 1911, this is a perfect example of the massively sized trees and shrubs which result from the growing conditions found at Blithewold.



Hydrangea Macrophylla: 'Alpengluhen' Somewhat past bloom, but stunning nonetheless.



Flowers of the Button Bush, (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*), which I heard about recently on WPR's Garden Talk. It is a wetland plant, hardy in Zones 5-9, used for food and protection by many animal species though poisonous to humans.



ADVICE FROM THE YGL

Here is this issue's advice from B.J. and the YGL staff.

Is compost beneficial in my garden? Jean

Composting is an excellent slow-release fertilizer for vegetable and flower gardens. Research indicates that nutrients in compost are released at the rate your plants need them. Compost improves the soil health and acts as an inoculant to your soil, adding microorganisms and attracting earthworms, which are nature's soil builders. Compost can also neutralize various soil toxins and metals such as cadmium and lead by bonding with them so they can't be taken up by plants. In some situations, compost has been found to act as a pH buffer so plants are less dependent on a specific soil pH.

Why do my pears have brown spots and rot inside but not on the outside? Harold

It would appear that your pears are simply over-ripe. Because pears ripen from the inside out, they tend to go brown and mushy on the inside before you notice anything happening on the skin. The trick is to pick pears before they ripen on the inside and to allow them to ripen in the refrigerator or some other cool spot. Here is a website that can give you more information about when to pick pears and how to ripen them indoors: <http://www.hort.purdue.edu/ext/pears.html>

My maple tree has white spots on the leaves. What is this? Kathy

Your tree may have a fungal disease. There are many types of fungus that can infect maple trees, causing leaf spots in various colors

(e.g., black, brown, gray, white) and sometimes causing early drop of the leaves. Most leaf spot fungi are not harmful to the tree itself but it can be unsightly. To prevent the fungus from returning year after year, it is recommended that you clean up all fallen leaves on the ground so that the fungus doesn't overwinter and re-infect the tree next spring. Here is a website that may provide you with more information about the types of fungi that can cause leaf spot diseases on shade and ornamental trees in the Midwest: <http://ipm.illinois.edu/diseases/rpds/648.pdf>

My curbside maple tree has black spots the size of a dime on every single leaf. One branch practically touches another maple tree that we have. Do I need to cut down the curbside tree or at least trim it to avoid contagion of the other maple tree? Susan

It sounds like your maple tree may have a fungal disease. There are many types of fungus that can infect maple trees, causing leaf spots in various colors (e.g., black, brown, gray, white) and sometimes causing early drop of the leaves. From your description, it sounds like 'tar spot'. Tar spot is not harmful to the tree itself but, as you've noticed, it can be unsightly. The tar spot fungus (*Rhytisma* species) overwinters on fallen leaves. In spring, it infects the upper surfaces of leaves. It is not necessary to cut down or trim the tree, since tar spot does not harm the tree itself. To prevent the fungus from returning year after year and/or infecting other trees, it is usually recommended that you clean up all fallen leaves on the ground so that the fungus doesn't overwinter and re-infect the

tree next spring. You may also spray the tree in spring with a fungicide (obtainable from your local garden center), but many experts do not even recommend this since, in most cases, the *Rhytisma* fungus is not harmful to the tree. If you choose to spray with a fungicide, be sure to follow the directions as written on the label. This link might give you more information:

<http://plantclinic.cornell.edu/factsheets/tarspotofmaple.pdf>
<http://hort.uwex.edu/articles/tar-spot>

We just purchased a new home with ten different fruit trees. We are clueless how to care for these trees. Do I need a tree specialist to prune or can I do myself? Donald

Certainly you may prune your own trees, but if you are new to pruning, it might be worth your while to consult with a certified arborist who can evaluate the state that your trees are currently in and can recommend steps to take to keep them healthy, vigorous, and productive. With so many different trees, there are a lot of ifs, ands, and buts to keep in mind. Fortunately, the usual time for pruning fruit trees is in late winter/early spring, so you have at least six months to read up about it. In the meantime, there are a few things that you can do right now to start the pruning process. First, remove water sprouts. Water sprouts are branches that point towards the sky. They produce vegetative growth only, do not produce fruit, and essentially suck energy that could be better used on other parts of the tree. Second, remove suckers. Suckers are branches that sprout at the base of the tree. Like

ADVICE FROM THE YGL ~ Continued

water sprouts, these compete with the tree for energy that can be better used elsewhere. Third, remove any dead or broken branches. Dead and broken branches are invitations to fungi, bacteria, and other disease organisms that would love to get into your trees. Here is a website that might help you start on your path of learning how to prune your trees: <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/hil/aq29.html>

How deep should I plant an arborvitae tree? John

The rule for planting any type of tree or shrub, arborvitae included, is to plant it at the same depth that it was planted in the container or ground from which you obtained it. It is also generally recommended that you remove any burlap or wire that may be holding the root ball in place. Make the planting hole wider than the root ball so that the roots have prepared soil in which to expand.

When is the best time of the year to plant evergreens? Rudi

It's best to plant evergreens in spring, summer or early fall. Evergreens planted in late fall often don't have enough time to get established, and they suffer winter injuries. Here is a link to a publication that will give you more details about how best to plant evergreens: <http://learningstore.uwex.edu/assets/pdfs/A1730.PDF>

Our garlic plants have gone into seed. Do I break the seed off now? Francis

Since garlic is generally grown for its bulbs, it is recommended that garlic scapes (flowering stalks) and bulbils (little bulbs that form at the tops of the scapes) be removed from the plant so that the plants will

put their energy into the bulb. Scapes and bulbils can be used in cooking, such as in stir-fries, and bulbils can be planted, but it will take longer for them to form mature plants than those planted from bulbs.

I have three lilac bushes that I planted about 5 years ago. They are beautiful bushes about 4 ft tall and very green but I can't get them to bud. I pruned them back last fall and added blooming fertilizer but still nothing. Any ideas would be welcome. Sarah

Pruning your lilacs in the fall is the reason your lilacs are not blooming in the spring. Lilacs bloom on the previous year's growth, which you are cutting off by pruning them at that time. Lilacs should be pruned right after the blooms have faded in the spring and just before new growth starts. Whatever new growth they make over the summer is where the blooms for next spring will set.

I have successfully used newspaper underneath woody mulch (bark nuggets, etc) a number of times to create mulched beds on top of grass and/or weeds. How many sheets thick should my newspaper layer be? Tom

The following website from the University of Vermont Extension recommends that you use at least 10 layers of newspaper: <http://www.uvm.edu/pss/ppp/articles/jun99tip.htm>

I'm looking for a good tree pruner to do some immediate much needed pruning of several trees on our property. Jason
Unfortunately, Master Gardeners cannot endorse individual contractors. However, if you look up "Tree Service" in the Yellow Pages, you will find several tree specialists

who will be able to provide the type of service you request of them.

I found an infestation of Japanese Beetles in a rose bush in my yard this morning.

From what I read online, there is limited ways to treat this. Any advice? Karen

One thing that you can do is to hand-pick the bugs and put them in a can of soapy water. Will this completely eliminate them? Probably not, but you will feel as though you are doing "something". This article from the UW-Extension <http://hort.uwex.edu/articles/japanese-beetle> details the life-cycle of the beetle and offers suggestions for treatment of an infestation and prevention techniques as well. Above all, say the entomologists, do not invest in a "trap" because, once the trap is filled with your beetles, it will welcome those from your neighbor's yard!

Can someone give me some ideas on how to get rid of Creeping Charlie? Jan

Creeping Charlie or ground ivy is a particularly problematic weed. As you've no doubt discovered, it rapidly becomes invasive. Depending upon whether it is invading your lawn or your garden, there are several things you can do to control and, hopefully, eliminate it, including changing the growth environment, hand-pulling it, and using herbicides. Following is a UW-Extension publication that can provide you with more information about getting rid of creeping charlie: <http://hort.uwex.edu/articles/creeping-charlie>

ANNUAL O.M.G. GARDEN CRAWL

Chris Grohmann's home in Mequon and the Lasata Nursing Home were featured on this year's garden crawl on August 15, 2013. M. Lynn Schmid provided information and photos of the event. Thanks, Lynn!



**Chris
Grohmann's Home
&
Gardens,
Mequon, WI**



Raised beds—bursting with zinnias and assorted veggies—greet visitors who meander down a narrow drive towards the unique utopia owned by Chris Grohmann and her husband.

Chris's garden arch beckons all to take a closer look... butterflies, flowers, a life-like parrot and a whimsical lizard welcome visitors to this special space.



Sky blue waters, sky blue plates and table coverings. Delicious treats for all OMG's...





OMG's relax for a moment in the LASATA gazebo, constructed by OMG's and friends.

**Lasata
Nursing Home,
Cedarburg, WI**



Gardeners gather to inspect hostas which were donated and planted by The Hosta Society.



Lovely cabbages grow among tall garden phlox. Raised beds are utilized extensively at Lasata.



Karl Forester grasses and other plantings adorn a relaxation area at Lasata. Planners often utilize Wisconsin natives throughout the grounds.



Whimsical mural and additional hostas accent a restful space at Lasata.

COOK'S CORNER

Blistered Baby Beans

M. Lynn Schmid, Certified Master Gardener
A.A.S. Landscape/Horticulture/Arboriculture



The joy of harvesting home-garden veggies (especially green beans!) is one I share with my Master Gardener colleagues, as well as my “foodie friends” who enjoy growing fresh and tender veggies at home. Green beans make an appearance in many backyard gardens, and there are interesting varieties of seeds available.

My favorite time of day to harvest green beans: early evening when foliage is dry and sun is low in the sky. *My favorite time* to harvest green beans: when each baby bean is fully formed, but tiny and tender, usually starting late July. (*The baby beans in this photo were harvested from our home garden on August 1st*) In our garden, the bean harvest usually extends from late July through September since I like to plant a new section every two weeks. Beans don't have to be planted in rows; feel free to plant in circles or squares—whatever you like! Even large containers work well, but green beans are “heavy feeders” so if using containers, you will want to use an organic fertilizer for best yield. *But I digress...*

What I really wish to share is my new favorite cooking method for green beans: *blistering!* A hot fry pan, either stainless steel or cast iron, works best. When the pan is searing hot, add just one TBS olive oil plus one TBS butter and toss in rinsed, but dry, green beans (2 – 3 cups approx). Listen to them sizzle... snap... pop... and crackle! You will quickly observe the transformation to a vivid shade of green. Stir; allow beans to cook a minute or two, and they are crunchy! NOTE: Since some nutrients in green beans are water soluble, vitamins can be lost if cooked or steamed in water; the blistering method utilizes no water.

Serving suggestions: Finely mince two cloves of garlic and stir in for the last 30 seconds of cooking time with a scant sprinkling of sea salt, if desired.

My favorite topping for green beans which my sister, Karen, taught me is crunchy, butter-browned, thinly sliced almonds! In a separate fry pan, melt one TBS butter add 1/2 cup thinly sliced almonds. Cook almonds low and slow, stirring frequently. When almonds are light brown and crunchy, remove from heat and scatter on beans just before serving to maintain crunch.

Roasted Vegetable Tart

Recipe adapted from Gardeners.com
Photo by Mary Reilly-Kliss
Makes one 10" square tart



1 prepared crust (I used a pre-made, refrigerated crust)
4 cups vegetables, trimmed and cut into chunks of similar size, about 1/2". Good choices include leeks, eggplant, broccoli florets, fennel and summer squash
1 sweet red onion (1/2 cup), cut into chunks 1 head garlic 1 teaspoon dried rosemary 1 teaspoon dried thyme
1/2 teaspoon salt 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground pepper 1/4 cup olive oil 2 oz goat cheese (I substituted shredded Mozzarella) 2 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese
Preheat oven to 400 degrees F.

Prepare the filling: In an oven-proof baking dish, spread the vegetables (except the garlic) in a single layer and nestle the garlic head among the vegetables. Crush the rosemary with the palms of your hand to release oils, and sprinkle over the vegetables, along with thyme, salt and pepper. Pour the olive oil over the vegetables, with a small drizzle over the garlic; toss to coat. Bake for 35 to 45 minutes, stirring occasionally to make sure everything cooks evenly. Remove from the oven, and set aside to cool.

Assemble the tart: Form a rustic crust on a parchment paper lined sheet pan by smoothing the crust out and folding up the edges. Arrange the roasted vegetables (except the garlic) evenly on top. With a scissors, cut off the top of the garlic and squeeze the roasted garlic onto the vegetables. Top with the goat cheese and Parmesan. If there is any juice left in the bottom of the pan from roasting the vegetables, spoon a few tablespoons over the vegetables. Bake on a baking sheet for 25 minutes. Let the tart cool a few minutes before removing the bottom section of the pan; slice into squares and serve warm. The original recipe also called for a tapenade to be spread on the crust before putting the veggies on. I skipped that and it was just fine.

THE UW EXTENSION—OZAUKEE COUNTY MASTER GARDENER'S NEWSLETTER

The Best Dirt SUMMER, 2013

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