September Report

Taylor Thorson- Ruth Borun Scholar 2025-2026
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Although September marks the beginning of Fall, the garden looks lush and colorful with flowers. There are touches of autumn peeking through, spots that have browned and tall seed heads standing out against the backdrop of dahlias and cosmos. It's a beautiful mix and I am continuously impressed with how long the garden sustains this balance.

Peacock Garden. *Miscanthus* grass pokes out above the brightly fuchsia-colored cosmos.

Peacock Garden. Asters are beginning to bloom and continue to add new color to the beds. *Symphotrichum lateriflorum var. horizontalis* in front, next to *Tagetes 'Cinnabar'*.

Area sweeps

One of the first things we are tasked with in the mornings are area sweeps. The paths will be cleared, blooms inspected for deadheading, general tidy and de-browning. It seems like a fairly simple task, but there's a lot of thoughtfulness that goes into it. The Dixter team seems to have a good eye for what to take and leave- they have a light hand and are conscious of why they may leave more than in other gardens. I fear my initial instinct is to tidy a bit more than needed, but I am proceeding with caution and erring on the side of leaving things be. It feels a bit like retraining myself and reframing how I look at regular maintenance. Leaf litter on the ground is habitat, seed heads provide food, and while some weeds have to go, others can also be a food source.

High garden pathway. How impressively tall! This garden really demands participation. As you walk through the paths, you can't help but brush up against plants, sometimes ducking under and around. It's a wonderful and playful experience that makes the garden feel expansive.

Meadow Cutting

My first day was spent meadow cutting. The majority of the meadows had already been cut up to this point, but there were still a few more to go. The initial cut is made with a Tracmaster power scythe. I didn't know this type of equipment existed until now, but wow, I was impressed. Frankly, I want one. The finished cut is nice and close to the ground. Truly perfect for meadow cutting where the grass can be tall and would take forever with just a mower or tractor. After the initial cut was made, the straw was raked together and put into large bags. We took some of these bags to other fields and strewed the straw and seed around in hopes of seeding that field with wildflowers like the common spotted orchid, *Dachtylorhiza fuschii*. The timing of this cut is also important for the seedlings that were just starting to germinate.


(left) Tracmaster. (right) Strewing in the new field.

Hedging

I really enjoy hedging. Dixter yew hedges present a real challenge- they dip and curve and have slightly deviated from their original shape into something more whimsical. The entire time, you really have to give them your full focus and make slight changes depending on the thickness or previous years cuts. Michael and Ben gave a great walkthrough of how to approach hedging. They talked about the batter or angle that the hedge should have, with the top being the guide and the bottom being slightly flared out. This is to ensure the bottom of the hedge has access to sunlight and will not die back. You have to constantly be changing your grip and cutting at different angles to get the right length and consistent look.

Yew hedge in the front meadow. Here you can really see the way light can help guide cuts- where more needs to be taken off or a line isn't quite straight.

Cold Frame building

Tyler and I had spent a few days building four coldframes. I really enjoyed learning how to make these and feel like it will come in handy for many more years. After much plant tidying and pathway reinforcing, the coldframes were placed in the revamped car park. It'll be exciting to see this space transform.

I'd also like to express deep thanks to the folks who have made my time here possible. I realize what an amazing opportunity this scholarship is and will make the most of this year.