

Backus garden fosters healthy, active lifestyle

by Gail DeBoer
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The Backus Community Garden, location on west side of Hwy. 371 next to Emmanuel Lutheran Church, is easy to find.

It's also a reminder of the generosity that made the garden possible in the first place.

In the summer of 2019, Whitehead was looking for a garden site in the Backus area and contacted Emmanuel Lutheran Church (LCMS) for help. Church leaders decided to donate land between the church and Country Garden Center to the north.

"Emmanuel was in favor of providing garden space where community members would have an opportunity to participate in a healthy, active lifestyle," said Becky Schmid and Rae Borst, church members who serve as garden coordinators.

The community garden is about 40 by 120 feet, with 25 plots: two wheelchair accessible beds, seven raised round or square beds and 16 square or rectangular in-ground beds.

Circle beds were donated by Hunt Technologies. Schrupp Excavating brought in black dirt, along with wood shavings from Christensen Forest Products.

Gardening tools are available for all to use and are kept in a garden shed. The entire garden is fenced with a locked gate.

Rental rates range from \$7 to \$50 for various size plots. A work program is offered to offset rental costs. Gardeners are asked to agree to certain rules and regulations, such as use of only natural or organic fertilizers and no herbicides or pesticides. Children are welcome but must be supervised; and animals are not allowed at any time.

The Backus garden



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opened in May 2020. In 2021, 18 people participated.

"Our gardeners are a mix of first-timers and experienced," Becky noted. "They range in age from 10 to 93 years old. They come for the usual reasons: lack of sun, lack of space, etc."

Last season was a success. "We had all our beds rented or donated and got fairly good yields, although the summer heat with very little rain posed a challenge."

Another challenge was a weed issue around the garden's perimeter. This year's plans include adding rocks around the garden to

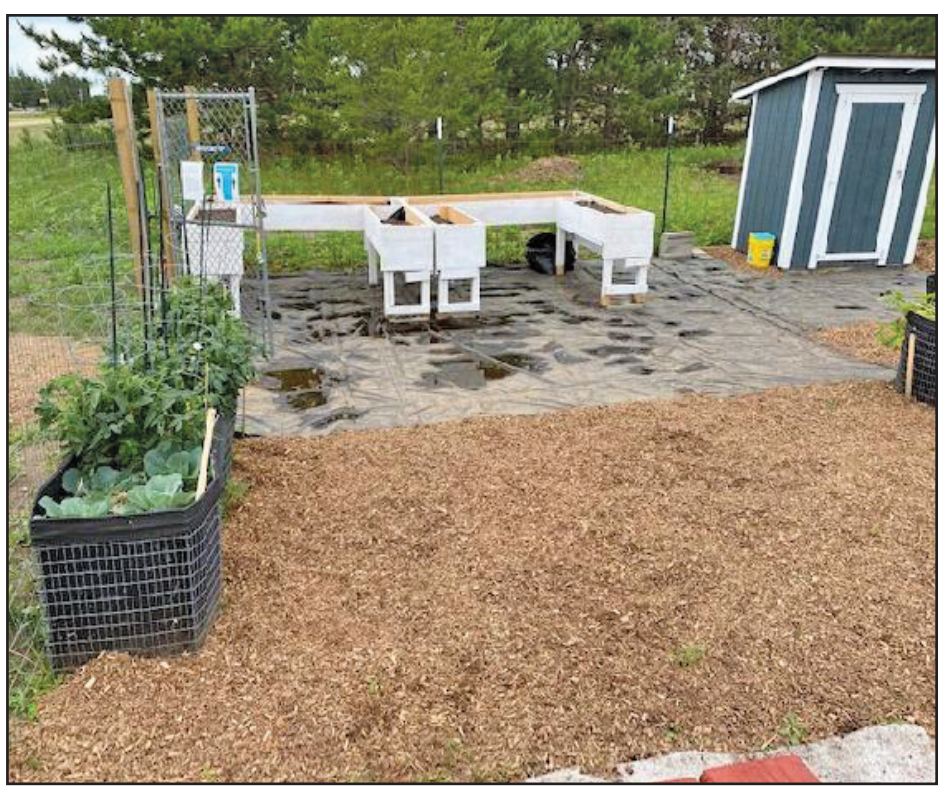
control weeds; adding additional water faucets; and, eventually, expanding the garden.

Gardeners keep their own produce, share it or donate it, as they choose. One garden bed is designated as a community bed, currently used to grow herbs.

"Most people raised the usual vegetables, pretty much everything except corn, plus some pollinating flowers," Rae listed.

This spring, flyers and business cards will be available at the garden gate for prospective gardeners.

For more information, contact either Becky at (218) 252-2147; Rae at



Garden amenities include a garden shed with tools, perimeter fencing with a locked gate and water on site.

(218) 839-9253; or email to backuscommunitygarden@gmail.com.

Next week: Longville and Remer Community Gardens

Four Backus Community gardeners take a break to chat and exchange gardening tips.

The Backus Community Garden is located next to Emmanuel Lutheran Church off Highway 371.



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Free virtual gatherings offered by 100 Rural Women nonprofit organizations

The organization 100 Rural Women announces its upcoming 50 sessions of virtual programming available free.

Thanks to the input gathered from rural convenings over the last year, the organization will offer content based on this feedback. Sessions are from 30 to 60 minutes to fit busy and changing schedules. To register, go to www.100ruralwomen.org

"Building resilience, making connections, and sharing leadership stories were women's top requests in our focus groups last summer and fall," said Teresa Kittridge, founder of 100 Rural Women.

Registration for these four topics is open now:

• 45-minute "Ask a Leading Woman" sessions will feature rural women sharing their life story and pathway to leadership, serving as formal and informal leaders. After her presentation, we will facilitate a Q&A and discussion for the participants to learn more about their current roles and

how to get involved.

• 30-minute "Mind & Body Resiliency through Movement" sessions will guide participants in basic yoga, meditation, relaxation, and other restorative practices. No equipment or gear necessary, just join in comfy clothes and our trained facilitators will lead you through the rest.

• 30-minute "Morning Connection" sessions will encourage informal discussions among participants. Like a morning coffee conversation, the goal is to connect with other women while a host will facilitate.

• 60-minute "Network" sessions will have specific themes and will facilitate relationship building for participants.

Individuals interested in participating in any of these free, virtual weekly sessions can see more on the 100 in 100 Events page.

100 Rural Women is an emerging 501(c)3 nonprofit based in northern Minnesota.