



Remer's Community Garden is fenced with eight handicapped accessible raised beds; four children's garden beds; six 8-by-8 low beds and a variety of in-ground plots. Photos submitted

Remer Community Garden collaborates with U of M on seed trials

by Gail DeBoer
Staff writer
gdeboer@pilotindependent.com

The Remer Community Garden occupies a beautiful site surrounded by pines, tamaracks and meadows on Highway 7 north of town.

Currently 200-by-100 feet, about half an acre, the garden will more than double this year to 1.5 acres, with the addition of three-quarters acre for more garden plots and a quarter acre for apple trees.

Master Gardeners Matt and Laura Moraczewski are garden president and manager, respectively.

"Matt and I had a cabin in the area for more than 25 years but didn't know about the Remer garden until Simon Whitehead ran

an article in a local newspaper," Laura explained. The garden was started in 2017 and became part of the SHIP program in 2020.

Now full-time residents, she and Matt are actively involved in Remer's community garden. They have been joined by Curt and Marcia Stowell of Remer, also master gardeners.

In 2021, 10 people planted garden plots that normally rent for \$20 per plot or raised bed, although fees were not charged last year.

The land and onsite water supply are donated by Father's Hearts and Hands Food Bank. The garden is fenced and has 8x4 foot raised beds; eight handicapped accessible raised beds; four children's garden beds; six 8x8 foot low beds;

and a variety of in-ground plots.

"Produce from community plots is shared with local food shelves," Laura added. "Last year we donated over 2 tons to food banks in Remer, Walker and Grand Rapids [plus] hundreds of pumpkins in the fall. We [also] have a fall give-away event for the community."

Remer follows no-till, organic principles when possible but does allow some organic fertilizer. Existing soil has been enriched with compost, aged manure, dirt and other amendments. The garden's charter follows standard community garden policies.

Producing fresh, locally-grown vegetables for local residents in need is a major motivation for gardeners. Another benefit is having a fenced-in area "where [gardeners] can grow produce without worries about deer, bears and other critters," Laura adds.

"We had a great harvest in 2021! We did have some challenges with rodents eating the pumpkins; and the drought kept us busy with almost-daily watering."

In 2021, the Remer garden housed three large plots dedicated to University of Minnesota's delicate squash seed trial plants. More than 200 squash

were harvested and donated to Grand Rapids High School, and eight families took home squash to cook and taste-test to help select the proven winners. Also part of the 2021 seed trials were tall marigolds which proved to be great pollinators for the squash. In 2022, the garden area devoted to seed trials will expand and include trials for brandywine tomatoes, china asters and dwarf sunflowers.

Most garden plots are a mix of vegetables and flowers, so pollinator plants are encouraged.

In 2022, the garden will follow crop rotation principles for all in-ground plots. Raised beds will have compost or organic matter added and some will rotate crops. Because the garden will double in size, the water supply will have to be expanded. Another possibility is creating a maze from either corn or tall grasses.



Midsummer's bounty stretches as far as the eye can see.

To learn more about Remer's Community Garden or to reserve a plot, contact Laura at moraczewskilaura@gmail.com



Hundreds of squash and pumpkins were harvested and donated to the community and Grand Rapids High School.



Two young gardeners carefully water seeds in a raised bed.





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