

Watertown 1st Congregational Church, UCC Garden Project

In early winter 2009, I was asked to design a memorial garden for the church. The site was a large, 21x 50 raised bed in the parking lot at the church. The bed was placed there 18 years ago when the church was built. It is irregularly shaped and approximately oval. Members of the congregation felt free at that time to plant anything in it, helter skelter. Thus it was a hodge podge of everyone's intrusive extra plants, including a small multi stemmed Maple tree. There were wild roses everywhere and every weed known to mankind had settled in. It was completely overrun with thistles and ox-eye daisies. We decided early on that there was very little worth saving from it. The good news was that thanks to a bequest from friends of the church, we had a budget of \$3000 for it.

I worked on this project with a member of the church and she and I decided that we would like a garden that was attractive to butterflies and hummingbirds.

The garden I designed features a 36 inch ceramic pot on a brick base at one end with a path running the length of the garden and passing under an arbor. There is an obelisk for climbing plants, a birdbath, a very large ceramic vase, and several large field rocks.

We began in the spring of 2010 by having the tree removed and by removing all the wild roses and other plants. We then rototilled a wagon load of aged Clydesdale manure into the bed. After everything was planted, we mulched it with a thick layer of newspaper and used wood mulch over that. The path was created by using a different type of mulch for it.

We started with shrub planting in late April. We planted 3 Carefree Wonder pink rosebushes, a Limelight Hydrangea, Miss Kim Lilac, Korean Spice Viburnum, Red Prince Weigela, and 2 Scarlett Dropmore Honeysuckles to climb the arbor. Perennial planting began in May and includes 40 Asiatic Lilies, 20 Daylilies, and about 50 other perennials which include Scabiosa, Salvia, Purple Coneflower, and Liatrus. Perennial Geraniums, Columbine, Shasta Daisies, Asclepsia, Monarda, Garden Phlox, Blue Campanula, and 4 native grasses.

We use annuals for the ceramic pot, a large area on one end that we left unplanted for annuals and along each side of the path. We vary them slightly from year to year but always use Pentas, Sweet Potato Vines [to trail over the edge of the raised bed] Wave Petunias, Vinca, some type of Zinnias and Parsley [for the Swallowtail Butterfly]. It takes about 75-100 annuals. In the past 2 years we have also used Lantana, Scaveola, Wax Begonias, Gerbera Daisies and Blue Salvia. We have had Morning Glories on the obelisk both years. The arbor has a small bench on each side of it and we have used them for a small water garden in a pot and a very tall "guest cactus" that spent the summer with us and rewarded us with beautiful yellow blooms.

In the fall of 2010 we planted 100 each of Tulips and Daffodils in the bed. In fall we create a display of pumpkins, gourds, etc in the annual area at the end and at Xmas we fill the large pot with Xmas greens. This has been a great educational tool for me; I have never been there when I didn't have numerous people stopping with questions about this garden and also their own gardens and plants. Because there is a nursery school and Day Care on the premises, the people who stop are not only members of the church but other people from the community. Church members have caught on to the fact that I am usually there on Tuesday and Friday mornings and are often waiting for me to talk about something.

I have never been there without seeing Hummingbirds- one morning there were 5 at once in the Honeysuckle and all summer Butterflies are sailing all over. An additional bonus has been the Bees, in July and August there were literally hundreds of them everywhere.

Total cost of the garden the first year was \$2000. The balance of the gift will be used for yearly expenses related to the garden.

We were very proud to have been selected by the Watertown Arts Council to receive the "Garden of the Month" award for August. A large sign proclaiming this was placed in the garden for a month and a picture and article was published in the Watertown Daily Times.

This has truly been a rewarding experience for me.

Jan S., JCMGV