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**MARVEL OF BLOOM AND GRACE//GARDENERS OF EVERY SIZE,
SHAPE AND AGE BLOSSOM EVERY SUMMER, THEIR
POSSIBILITIES LIMITED ONLY BY THEIR IMAGINATION ... AND
THEIR TENACITY IN BATTLING WEEDS.**

KATIE KIEFFER *Community Columnist*

Minnesota Mary, quite contrary, how does your garden grow? With lupine and delphiniums and salvia all in a row.

Summer has finally come to Minnesota. And for Minnesota gardeners, summer means three glorious, long-awaited months of continual blooms.

Gardening is an activity that brings families, friends and communities together and can be pursued by people of all ages and income levels. As a toddler, I found nothing more enjoyable than following my mother with a hose after she planted the flowers. Children love gardening, whether it is in a garden of their own or a small plot adopted from a parent's garden.

If yard space is limited for large gardens, container gardening is a friendly alternative. Children will enjoy container gardening because it gives them something to care for and to watch grow. Using potting soil and a packet of favorite flowers, a child can easily create a container garden. Flowers such as marigolds and zinnias work well because they are hardy and grow large, bright blossoms favorable to children. The child will love watching flowers grow in a sunny window and watering them each day.

If possible, one of the best ways to fully experience gardening at a beginning level is to have a small annual garden in the yard. Annuals (plants that live for only one season) are ideal because the flowers bloom all summer (whereas perennials bloom only in their season) and vegetables give kids results all summer long.

Children who decide they would like to pursue gardening on a competitive level may want to join a 4-H club in their community. As a 4-H member, they will be able to enter their prize vegetables, flowers and flower arrangements in their county fair at the end of the summer.

Potted plants also can serve adults who love color and vegetation, but have limited time or yard space. The front steps or a patio can be transformed into a miniature paradise when decorated with a few potted plants or hanging baskets. Container gardening is also extremely easy; anyone can do it. Gardeners on the cheap will find garage sales are wonderful places to find beautiful and inexpensive flowerpots and garden decorations.

For those who love gardens, yet lack the time or money to create their dream garden, there are many gardens in Minnesota that are open to the public throughout the year. Lake Harriet has a beautiful rose garden, rock garden and perennial garden with brass fountains, improvisational comedy and Shakespeare in the Park. Como Park Conservatory has a bonsai tree exhibit; a tropical exhibit with unique, ancestral trees; and a Japanese garden. Normandale College also has a beautiful Japanese garden. Theodore Worth Park offers wildflower, woodland, marsh and prairie gardens, as well as native Minnesota trees and a bird sanctuary. Further north, Duluth's Enger Tower offers both exquisite gardens and views of the Lake Superior.

Finally, for those gardeners who get the winter blues and yearn to see flowers in full bloom, there is the annual spring Dayton's/Bachman's garden show.

Many Minnesota communities also have garden clubs that maintain community gardens, open to the public. These gardens are beautiful, and are great places to go to relax or to get gardening ideas. The community gardens are usually looking for volunteers to assist in maintaining the gardens. Most garden clubs also host annual plant sales that are open to the public. These sales are an inexpensive way to start a perennial garden because the plants sold are all native to

Minnesota and will thrive here. The garden club members will also be able to give helpful advice on the plants, and on gardening in general.

Some nursing homes have found that gardening is a wonderful way to bring their residents together to enjoy healthy activity and socialization. They have done this by having their residents create and maintain their own residential garden. In this way, the residents have many opportunities to interact with each other and create, invent and relax in a healthy atmosphere.

Minnesota Mary, quite contrary, where and why do your gardens grow? In containers, yards and greenhouses everywhere to bring joy and community to Minnesota.

Kieffer of Rosemount (e-mail: bk943402@aol.com) is one of nine Pioneer Press Community Columnists for 2001. She is a senior at Trinity School at River Ridge, Bloomington, and was home-schooled through eighth grade.

Illustration: Photo: PIONEER PRESS FILE PHOTO

Roses are among amateur gardeners' favorite blooms. This giant yellow rose was part of a plant sale at the Como Park Pavilion, where gardeners get all kinds of ideas.