

Summer Fun in the Garden

Victoria Reinhardt, Ramsey County Commissioner

It's summer in Minnesota. Time to fit a year's worth of sun into 4 months. One of the best ways to do that is to be out in your yard. Whatever neighborhood I am in in White Bear Lake, I am in awe of the beautiful flowers, greenery and gardens. We clearly like to dress up our homes. Finding your green thumb is good for you, your community and your environment – whether it is tending a nice colorful rain garden or growing your own garden fresh vegetables.

If you are like me, you could use some help getting your yard to match the one in your mind. The Ramsey County Master Gardeners are a great resource. Master Gardeners are dedicated volunteers that want to share their knowledge with the community. You can call them at 651-704-2071 for unbiased answers to your gardening questions, or visit them online for a list of events they will be available at, such as farmers markets or at compost sites. The Master Gardeners also run a clinic on Wednesdays and Saturdays at the Barn at 2020 White Bear Avenue, where you can bring a sample of your plants and they can diagnose problems.

One of the earliest missions of the University of Minnesota was to work with counties to help people learn the best practices to till the soil and protect our natural resources. The connection is made in each county through the U of M Extension committees. I have been honored to serve on the Ramsey County Extension Committee since I was first elected to the County Board. The Extension Committee and the Master Gardeners are a great example of how local government works connecting people and resources for the betterment of our community. If you love to share your experiences with gardening and would like to learn more, you should consider becoming a Master Gardener yourself. It is a great way to keep in touch with your community and enjoy the outdoors.

For those of you who want to show off your home grown prowess, there is still time to enter your items in the Ramsey County Fair, but do it soon. Please visit www.ramseycountyfair.com for information and entry forms. Everyone is invited by to see our community's best gardeners, chefs, canners, bakers, artists and craftspeople display their wares from July 12th thru the 15th at the Ramsey County Fairgrounds on White Bear Avenue in Maplewood. There will also be fun for the whole family, including pig races, a petting zoo, music, food and carnival rides. Visit the county fair website for detailed information and a schedule of events, as well as information on discount ride tickets.

Like the saying goes “everything old is new again”. I am glad that people are paying more attention to the food they put on their table. Two years ago we reconstituted The Saint Paul/Ramsey County Food and Nutrition Commission to help engage more people in the conversation about access to healthy food in Ramsey County. I am looking forward to their first report, which will point out strengths and weaknesses of our local food system and suggest ways we can improve our access to healthy food. If you are interested in seeing the report or getting more information on either the Food and Nutrition

Commission or the Ramsey County Extension Committee send an email to me at Victoria.reinhardt@co.ramsey.mn.us or call me at 651-266-8368. See you at the County Fair!