



## About Our Garden Ministry

We welcome Marie Noelle Chaumette of the Xaviere Sisters to the Garden Ministry. Marie Noelle is committed to healing our relationship with the Earth and her help in caring for St. Gabe's Garden on Monday and Wednesday mornings is invaluable.

We also welcome Lance Cabacungan to the position of Gardening Helper. He has just completed his first year in Biomedical Sciences at York University. Lance's tenure with us is made possible by a Canada Summer Jobs Grant, which we have been fortunate to secure for the second consecutive summer.



The picture shows the team of Lance and Marie Noelle who provided the Good Shepherd with our first harvest of 2021 – Lance by picking the radishes and the garlic leaves, and Marie Noelle by delivering the produce.

As anyone who gardens knows, maintaining any garden, and especially one as large as St. Gabriel's, is a full-time task, but few of us can devote that kind of time and energy. Consequently, securing committed help from young people has been and continues to be instrumental developing and maintaining the Garden, both last summer and this. The results are both gratitude and joy!

Alas, bittersweetly, we say farewell to one of our founding members, Marie Zuzek, who since the beginning of the garden project has been generous with her energy, time, ideas and support. Marie has accepted a position as a Grief/Bereavement Counsellor at a hospice in Sarnia. We wish her success and happiness doing the work that is close to her heart.

As well as ministering to the Garden, the focus of the Garden Ministry this summer and fall is on encouraging parishioners and visitors to be ministered to **by** the Garden. As previously announced in our last newsletter, we have created several guides to facilitate reflective walks through the Garden and are having a "Guide House" installed near the meditation circle to make them easily available. We hope you will take advantage of them.

The Garden Ministry also hopes to offer a Day of Reflection this fall, if pandemic restrictions allow. Watch the bulletin for details.



To learn more about the Garden Ministry, email Heather Bennett at the address provided on the last page.

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*For the fruit(s) of all creation, thanks be to God;  
for the gifts of every nation, thanks be to God;  
for the ploughing, sowing, reaping,  
silent growth while we are sleeping,  
future needs in earth's safe-keeping, thanks be to God.*

**– Fred Pratt Green**



# Spotlight on the Garden

Heather Bennett

Just after sunrise one morning as I approached the church, I noticed to my left, the resident pair of tawny mourning doves atop a trellis, and to my right, a pair of robins foraging under the purple borage. Although I was only a few feet away from them, all four birds acknowledged me: the graceful female mourning dove by moving a little closer to the male; the male by puffing up his chest feathers and strutting forward; and the two robins by shifting their positions slightly. Earlier in the season, all of them would have flown or at least skittered a safe distance away on my approach. Now, they accept me in their garden home, for we have built a relationship. It's a lovely feeling that makes me want to preserve the garden, for them and for us.

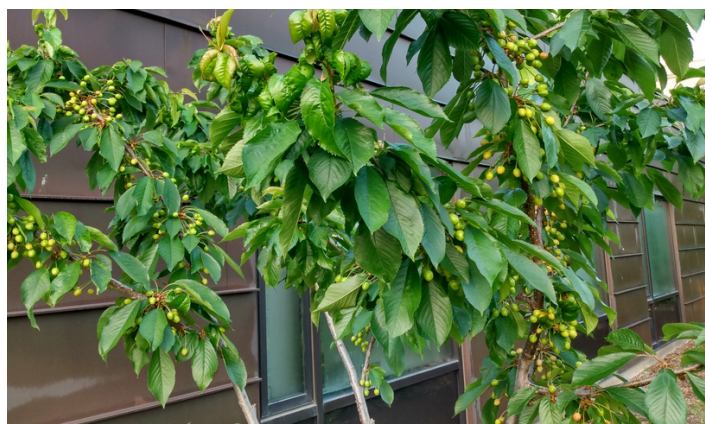


The above photo shows the new bed in the northwest corner of the south garden. It was completed with the planting of "living mulch" pathways of white clover between the smoke bush, serviceberry and elderberry shrubs, and the ferns and the tall miscanthus grass.



Thanks to Pat and Neal, our community garden productivity got a boost this spring with the addition of another larger square-foot box, located south of the meditation circle. With the move of the original four boxes to the same sunnier location, we are hoping for a further boost in productivity.

The heroic moving team, from left to right: Marie Noelle, Claire, Heather, Pat, Murray, Neal, and Caroline.



Given the profusion of fruit ripening on the cherry trees, as well as the blueberry, haskap berry and currant shrubs, 2021 will yield a bountiful harvest! When you are next in the Garden, feel free to taste the fruit. As with the produce from the community garden, most of the fruit from the orchard will go to the Good Shepherd Ministries.

## Spotlight on Yarrow Yellow

*Achillea filipendulina*



This native North American perennial flower can be found in our South Garden, in front of the sanctuary windows. Growing 2-4 feet high, it features lacy leaves, and produces multiple flat flower heads, each a round cluster of numerous compact yellow flowers which blossom abundantly from June to September, attracting bees and butterflies. Being drought-tolerant, it does well in ordinary and even sandy soils, but it also improves heavy clay soil, such as ours. Its scientific name connects the ancient Greek hero Achilles with Yarrow's many medicinal properties, such as reducing fever, and treating bleeding. Also dried for use in wreaths and bouquets, or placed in book pages to ward off insects, Yellow Yarrow is definitely "a keeper"!

*St. Gabriel's Garden, together with St. Gabriel's Church, address the vision of Fr. Thomas Berry and his community of Passionists, of a mutually enhancing relationship with the Earth. The Passionists are celebrating their 300th anniversary this year.*



# Growing is Transformation

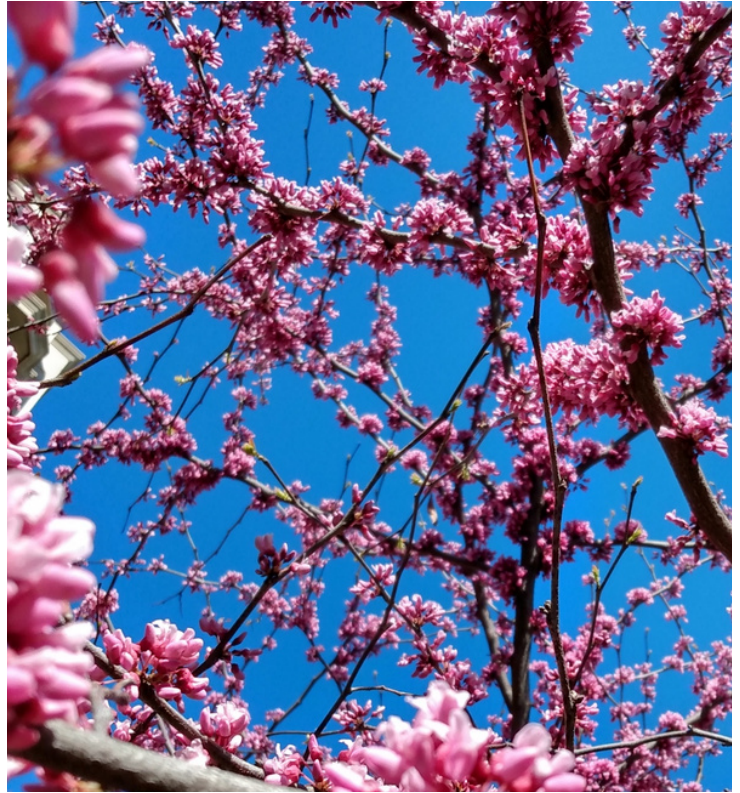
We have now reached that long-awaited time of the longest day of our year. It always seems so ironic that just as our growing season is really getting underway, the days begin to shorten. True, only fractionally each day, but inexorably, toward the shortest day at the end of the calendar year. So even light “transforms” in its manifestations.

The garden is living proof that the “resurrection” of spring becomes the “transformation” thereafter, as plant roots take hold, and the plant itself grows toward flowering, fruiting, and seed-production. Just as Jesus was unrecognizable to his disciples, having been transformed (in a way we do not fully understand) by his Resurrection, the natural world is full of equally miraculous transformations

The tiniest seeds are powerhouses of DNA—which given the right conditions of soil, light and moisture—produce roots, sprouts, stems and leaves that reach upward toward the light, even as root vegetables burrow into the soil. Each plant is following the genetic instructions that were housed within the seed or the cutting that began its seasonal growth.

St. Gabriel's Garden is home to a myriad of botanical species. The north garden hosts fruit trees and shrubs, as well as medicinal plants and herbs. Evergreen and deciduous trees provide homes to birds, insects, and in the undergrowth, also small mammals. Wildflowers find their way, too, amidst the rich plantings in the south garden, as well as the inevitable “happenstance” growth that every gardener experiences. Wildlife flourishes, treating visitors to birdsong, and not-infrequent sightings of fox, raccoon, rabbit, and chipmunk. Nestled between are the square-foot garden boxes which provide ongoing harvests to support the mission of the Good Shepherd Ministries downtown.

Such a rich natural environment in a relatively compact space makes tracking the seasonal transformations readily possible and attractive. As we walk through the garden space, the growth is unmistakable...from the early, “brave” sproutings, through blossoming, leafing and fruiting, the garden is ever-changing. Yet, it is always beautiful. Each plant has its “season”, each coming to fruition according to its nature. Some flourish and fade early...some take more than one season to fully run their life-course. Some creatures are come and gone in a season; others, humans included, take years to fulfill their potential.



And each life also faces challenges, whether from environmental stresses, or the influx of disease. But life is always in transformation, always finding a way. In the midst of pandemic conditions, we are reminded of Jesus's exhortation in his parable. “Consider the birds of the air. They neither sow nor reap..., yet your heavenly Father feeds them....” (Matthew 6:26) God reminds us that God's grace is always available to us, to help us find our way. And he is always waiting, in our hearts, for our attention and company.

As we reflect upon the ongoing transformations in the natural world, let us remember that we, too, are in the process of growth and transformation, not least in our attitudes toward creation, and our place within it. Most certainly, we are facing difficulties—challenges and obstacles to overcome, just as Our Lord did in following God's plan. But just as Jesus showed us how to trust in God's plan, just as we see God's creation continuing to persevere and grow, we can be assured that we, too, can transform. With all of creation, we are moving inexorably toward the fulfillment of God's promise.

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