

Healthy grapes and happy pollinators

Sister Ange Mayers

Here's an update on the Franciscans Sisters' grape arbor located east of the cemetery. Frank Athmann, the brother of Associate Mary Poser, revived our grape arbor in 2017. This fall these healthy vines produced a bumper crop. As reported by Erin Nash, director of Nutrition Services, 14 gallons of grape juice and about 25 pounds of fresh grapes were served in the sisters' dining room. The Little Falls High School Garden-to-Cafeteria project received 40 pounds of fresh grapes. Also, 50 pounds of fresh grapes were given to employees of the Franciscan Sisters.

To enhance the health of the grape arbor, Mary Poser planted Marigolds last spring under the arbor to prevent weeds from growing and as a protection from deer.

To further advance care of our gardens and plants, a Pollinators committee was formed in August of 2021 to accomplish three tasks: develop a pollinator garden; develop "pocket" areas of native habitat on St. Francis campus, Umbria and Ottertail; and transform "our" lands into native habitat. Members are Mary Poser, Elise Carey, Sisters Mary Hroscikoski, Bernice Rieland and Ange Mayers, Adam Grams, AAS, and JoAnn Dahl. Since its first meeting, information has been gleaned as to what are native plants, where to plant them around St. Francis campus and, VERY importantly, how to control the weeds.

Mary Poser and Sister Ange cleared the area under the grape vine. The next steps were spraying the ground with a solution of vinegar, salt and Dawn dish soap, then laying down newspaper, cardboard and straw. This made a preparation for winter. In the spring the ground will be ready for planting the pollinator flowers.

Lucky for us, as Mary Poser began clearing the area, she discovered a large area of asparagus plants that had not been tended to. Stay tuned for more garden news and continued updates on the work of the Pollinators committee!



Sister Ange Mayers and Mary Poser prepping the grape arbor for winter.