

# Star Tribune Beautiful Garden winners offer a bounty of inspiration

We asked readers to nominate gardens that were beautiful in spirit.

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DAN LEE

Gallery: One of the many themed gardens from Brainerd's Coralee Fox.

For the annual Star Tribune Beautiful Gardens contest, we once again asked readers to nominate gardens in their community that were beautiful in spirit.

And you delivered. Nominations were bountiful, with 117 submissions of gardens that do good.

The stories were truly beautiful and inspiring, and we want to thank everyone who took the time to nominate their neighbors, friends or members of their community.

It was difficult to narrow it down to just a few winners, but a panel of five judges ultimately decided on a variety of gardens that pulled at our heartstrings.

In addition to winners announced here, you'll find the stories of these gardens and the do-gooders behind them in upcoming issues of the Sunday Homes section and on [startribune.com](http://startribune.com).



PROVIDED BY TARA MARIA JAE WENCL, ANGELINA MCDOWELL MINNEAPOLIS

**Jae Wencil, Angelina McDowell, Minneapolis**

Free organic vegetables. Free yoga classes. Free concerts. Free puppet shows. A memorial site.

Two community members started the Old Highland Peace Garden in north Minneapolis during the pandemic to feed those in need of food. The community garden has continued to grow, as more people have come to rely on the free food it provides, said neighbor Nikki Carlson, who nominated the garden.

As needs of the community grew, so did the army of volunteers. One community member donated materials for a floating deck that doubles as a makeshift stage for events, while others organized maintenance and cleanup. Someone built a beehive.

The site has also become a memorial after three teens died when the vehicle they were in crashed at the site during a high-speed police chase last fall.

What started as a community garden has turned into a place where the community can gather and heal.

### **Perspectives' Gardens Staff, St. Louis Park**

The gardens of Perspectives Inc., a St. Louis Park human services agency, do more than help feed mothers and children emerging from homelessness. They serve as educational, nutritional and cooking tools, as well. Salsas, dried herbs, pesto, pickled vegetables and rhubarb sauce are just some of the things made from each year's harvest.

The gardens also provide a place of healing and light to ignite social justice and change, through the George Floyd Memorial Rock and Wildflower Garden.

### **Coralee Fox, Brainerd**

Coralee Fox has one goal for her Brainerd-area garden: to put a smile on the face of everyone who sees it. In this massive, 4-acre plot, the 80-year-old Crow Wing County Master Gardener pulls out all the stops.

From week to week, the garden is never the same. There's always something in bloom in the pond or the fairy, herb or rose gardens. She also has themed gardens with specific purposes, including a pollinator garden and an edible garden.

As neighbor and nominator Jennifer Lee said: "The gardens are ever-changing both in their beauty and their design, and provide great enjoyment for neighbors and visitors to the area throughout the summer and fall seasons."

### **Frogtown Green gardeners, St. Paul**

Frogtown Green operates on a shoestring budget. But what the resident-led, volunteer-powered environmental initiative lacks in funding it makes up for in volunteers and a mission to do good.

Frogtown Green is made up of four garden sites in St. Paul. There's the Our Village Community Garden, created to feed community members from its orchard and 40 raised vegetable beds. The Monarch City garden features more than 6,000 square feet of pollinator-friendly plants. The Tree Frogs Pop-Up Park, with 500 fruit and shade trees, serves as a mini-arboretum along busy Dale Street. And the Lily Pad Community Garden aims at mitigating the negative effects of climate change. When completed, the Lily Pad garden will host exhibits and demonstrations on composting, pollinators, tree planting, water conservation and more.

### **Lee and Carolyn Halbur, Maple Grove**

What started as a lakeshore restoration project 20 years ago has evolved into a monarch garden on the Halbur family's property in Maple Grove.

Lee Halbur has used milkweed to feed and shelter monarch butterflies. He also uses the garden as an educational tool. Because of his efforts, many families have been able to raise monarchs, often coming into the garden to help release them.

### **Gethsemane Community Garden, Minneapolis**

The Gethsemane Community Garden, at 10th Street and 4th Avenue S., beautifies an entry to downtown Minneapolis. It also feeds the community, providing some 1,000 pounds of fresh produce each season to the nearby Shelf of Hope food shelf.

In addition to the 22 private plots maintained by downtown residents and former parishioners (there is no longer a parish at the site), there is what is affectionately called the Giving Garden, in which produce is available to anyone who stops by. The garden includes a pergola and picnic tables as well as colorful flowers, native plants and habitat for pollinators.

"A true labor of love in a part of the city that has seen its share of hardship and neglect," wrote Greg Kaster, who nominated the garden.

This season, the program has embarked on a collaboration with the chef Sean Sherman and the Indigenous Food Lab to grow a plot demonstrating Native American foods.