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Greenway Gardeners turn weeds into wildflowers



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ST. VITAL

This summer you may have seen gardeners working along the South Trail and near the Fermor Superstore. Led by Wilma Sotas, the Greenway Gardeners are local residents who are restoring natural spaces near the Seine River.

Next to habitat destruction, invasive weeds are the most serious threat to natural spaces in cities. If not actively managed, Canada thistle, burdock, tufted vetch, and smooth brome replace native plants. Over time, high-quality forests or prairies are degraded.

The Greenway Gardeners are working to reverse this trend at three locations: the Triangle, the Meadow, and the Niakwa Trail Rain Garden.

The Triangle is at the intersection of three trails behind the Hindu Temple and Vic Wyatt House. It was 100 per cent weeds in 2015. Greenway Gardeners removed burdock, stinging nettle and thistle. They transplanted goldenrod and golden Alexander. This year, gardeners removed brome and planted stiff goldenrod, Canada anemone, and milkweed. The goal is to transform this weed-infested intersection into a garden of wildflowers.



Photo by Michele Kading

Greenway Gardeners at work in the Niakwa Trail Rain Garden.

The Meadow is located behind Villas on the Seine and River Meadow Estates. Greenway Gardeners spent days removing thistle and vetch. The Meadow has large stands of milkweed (important for monarch butterflies) and Indian hemp. Gardeners discovered fascinating wildlife. A tree frog was hidden among some leaves. Iridescent dogbane beetles were hard to miss. The goal is to create a meadow with more wildflowers than weeds.

The Niakwa Trail Rain Garden was planted in late 2015. Since then, Greenway Gardeners have weeded, transplanted, and watered the garden. Dozens of wildflowers were donated to fill empty spaces. Superstore kindly donated new trees and shrubs and provided water. The garden bench has become a

popular resting spot for folks carrying heavy groceries. The goal is to add more wildflowers and shade trees.

A tree planting event is planned for September if we can find a company to dig 30 large holes. If you have a digging machine and a generous heart, please contact SOS.

It is hard work to remove invasive weeds and replace them with native plants. It is also very rewarding. Volunteers meet new people, get exercise and fresh air, and connect with the earth. The results are worthwhile. Degraded landscapes become habitats brimming with biodiversity.

The 2017 Greenway Gardeners are: Wilma, Jacinta, Thuong, Anita, Janet, Tari, Pam, Isabelle, Veronica, Sandra, Fenella, Ray, Mike, Anne-Louise, Clark, and SOS River Keepers

(Mitchell, Laura, Joel, Alex).

Garden contributors are: Wilma, Pam, Michele, Pat and Norm, and St. Anne's Superstore (John, Colin, Steve).

Michele Kading is a community correspondent for St. Vital and the executive director of Save Our Seine — www.saveourseine.com

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