

Intelligencer Journal

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Herb hobby helps spice up Garden Spot meals

When Barbara Masho retired to Garden Spot Village in New Holland 10 years ago, she thought she wouldn't be able to continue her love of herb gardening.

But she was wrong.

She was given an 8-foot-by-8-foot plot of land, and she began growing a garden filled with herbs found in the Bible, such as allium, anemone, crocus, mint, hyssop, flax and coriander.

"It's a fun little garden," Masho said. "I've always loved herbs and growing them."

This summer, Masho was asked by Scott Weaver, director of campus services, and John Farber, chief operating officer, to plant a culinary herb garden for use by Garden Spot's dining services.

"They thought it was right up my alley," Masho said. "My specialty is culinary herbs. I was thrilled and said I would love to."





The culinary herb garden is near the main entrance so residents and visitors can enjoy it.

It is divided into quadrants, three planted with perennial herbs and one with annuals. The first part is the Italian garden, which is filled with four types of oregano (Greek, Italian, golden and hot and spicy), golden marjoram and sweet marjoram.

The second garden is the English herb garden, filled with rosemary, sage (pineapple and berggarten), thyme (lemon, golden, regular and English) and French tarragon. This garden is Masho's favorite because she found so many varieties of herbs, she said.

The next garden is the mint garden, with pineapple mint and peppermint. "Mint grows so fast," she said. This garden also includes jalapeno peppers. "A lot of herb gardens use peppers," Masho said. After the jalapenos, an annual, are finished for the season, Masho plans to take them out.

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The final herb garden is the annual herb garden, filled with sweet, mini-purple and lemon basil, as well as curled parsley.

Each garden is bordered with yarrow, Russian sage and lavender. In the center, around a sundial, Masho planted marigolds (the petals of which can be used on salads) and salvia to attract bees and hummingbirds to pollinate the herbs, she said.

"Everything is doing wonderfully. I'm so pleased," Masho said. "It's a real blessing to me to do it, and so many people enjoy it."

Herb gardens are something that everyone can enjoy, she said, even those without sight. "They can come and touch, smell and taste them."

More work on the garden will be done next year, she said. Between the stepping stones, Masho plans to add "steppables." Steppables are herbs that can be stepped on. When the herbs are brushed against, they release a scent into the air.

"It's lovely, lovely," she said.

Because it is a small garden and nearly 800 residents receive meals from dining services, Masho said at first she wasn't sure there were enough herbs.

But, she said, a little goes a long way. Masho said chef Janet Shindle likes to use a lot of herbs. "She has all kinds of wonderful recipes with herbs," she said.

Because all of the herbs are tagged, dining services pick their own to use each day, she said. "Janet loves going out and picking herbs."

For Masho, rosemary and lavender are her favorites. "You can put rosemary into so many things," she said.

She also said she thinks basil should be in every herb garden. "It's so versatile," she said.

Masho, 71, is a lifelong gardener. "I've always loved having my hands in the dirt. But I really fell in love with herbs at Longwood Gardens and seeing how many types and uses of herbs there were -- culinary, medicinal and perfume."

Masho worked at Longwood Gardens for 18 years.

"You can't work there and not love plants," she said.

The first eight years, Masho was a tour guide. All tour guides must take classes, such as botany and plant material courses.

Then for 10 years, Masho worked in the visitors center. "But you still have to know about plant materials. You get a lot of questions, questions, questions."

Masho retired from Longwood Gardens 15 years ago, but she said she still takes classes there. She also goes back every month to check out what Longwood is doing so she can do it, too.

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