

## Member Spotlight: Carey Pederson

My favorite Master Gardener Volunteer opportunity is definitely being an editor for the newsletter. We have lots going on so it makes my life a whole lot easier if I can sit down a little here and there to edit the newsletter.

We moved to a small farmette in Seymour about three years ago which has kept us plenty busy. There were some nice mature trees like red maples, linden, pine and mountain ash in the yard but that is about all. We have since planted over 100 balsam firs which I'm happy to report survived last year's frigid winter, two pear trees, a cherry tree, three apple trees and recently eight spiral willows in a few wet spots in the yard. We planted a quarter acre tall grass prairie which we were finally able to let grow this summer. It was hard, but with a little nudging from my husband, I kept the prairie cut the first two summers to allow it to get established and keep the weeds down. Our kids (ages seven, five and two) have had a fun time running through it and playing hide and seek.



We were able to harvest and freeze strawberries and raspberries from our patches this year. We had three of our six blueberries bushes die due to last year's cold winter so I bought two more bushes this year and planted them in a different location. We also planted some grape vines (for grape juice) to grow over a trellis. We have a large vegetable garden that we freeze or can whatever we don't eat immediately. My new favorite vegetable is zucchini...grill it, fry, bread, brownies, cookies...I have become obsessed with it this year which is good because it grows crazy! Our kids like to pick and eat the fresh vegetables out of the garden and already know that cucumbers can be turned into pickles!

It makes me feel good to be able to produce as much food for ourselves as possible. We have raised two steer (grass-fed beef) and have even had a dairy cow. We've been able to make cheese and yogurt from the fresh milk. While we enjoyed the fresh milk and a new calf we decided to take a break from cows because of the time factor. We still have egg layers and raise our meat bird chickens every summer. I wasn't so sure how I would do with the butchering of the chickens but it really isn't bad at all, plus it teaches our kids how much is involved with putting food on our plate. The interesting part is neither my husband nor I come from a farming background so we have learned lots the last few years!

My favorite garden activity is perennial gardening and watching the birds, bees and butterflies. This plays a big part of what type of plants I buy. Next summer I would like to focus on butterfly host plants. I would also like to plant a bunch of perennials like coneflowers (my favorite flower) near the the road so drivers can see something pretty during their drive. The thing I am most excited for is getting our barn painted. It is all fixed up, ready for the barn red paint, we just need a few no rain days in a row so we can paint. Then I can decide which plants I want to plant in front of it—a view from our kitchen window that I have been waiting to fix for awhile now. I'm thinking maybe hollyhocks, a few wild flowers maybe? I'll have the winter to dream something up.