



**SPOTLIGHTER –
Jodi Debaker**
Submitted by Jill VanDenEng



Jodi started helping her mother in the garden at age ten. At that time, she didn't have a choice. The practice stuck with her, as she maintains her garden beds of perennials, vegetables, and herbs like a worker bee.

"My motivator to get in the garden is pure beauty. I love to surround myself with flowers. My favorite plant would be tiger lilies. They are just beautiful."

While surrounded by her flowers, she has been known to kick off her flip flops and feel the earth. Her favorite tools to work with are her Fiskars snippers for deadheading and Neem for an organic approach to pest control.

Her greatest frustration in her garden would be the box elder next door that sends out thousands of babies she has to pull daily. It's also a challenge to keep her three dogs out of the beds.

"One of my greatest achievements would be taking the Master Gardener class...passing...and shazam, a wonderful life has begun."

Jodi takes on the role of teaching others about gardening with ease. She enjoys showing her granddaughter, Lillie, her methods in the garden. She also volunteers at the pollinator garden, Farmer's Market, the herb garden, and is on both the grounds and the education committees.

"My favorite Master Gardener opportunity is the pollinator garden. We have to identify plants. Farmer's Market is a great way to teach the community as well."

When she is not gardening, Jodi may be found in the kitchen using her harvest.

"Most people don't know that I'm a great cook." She often shares her recipes using fresh, organic ingredients with friends, but not all of them.

"My favorite recipe is spaghetti sauce. I use fresh herbs and tomatoes. I would share, but I can't. It's all in the shake and taste...repeat."

If she had a wish, it would be for a longer growing season. She is not a fan of the snow, but has lived with it both here in Wisconsin and in her home state of Maine. "I like Wisconsin because the people are friendly and helpful," she said.

During the long winter months, she looks forward to the arrival of the seed catalogs, and dreams of the days she can start planting seeds in one of her three greenhouses.

If money weren't an issue, she'd be in Hawaii, surrounded by the amazing flowers that grow there. "The smells of flowers there are incredible," she said.

And if the opinion of neighbors wasn't an issue, she'd get rid of her front lawn and grow a prairie.

"I dream about making my front lawn a prairie garden, get rid of the grass and plant natives. My neighbors wouldn't like it, that's why I haven't done it yet."

Gardening is certainly in her soul, and we are thankful Jodi is willing to share her skill, knowledge, and energy with the community. Like her favorite gardening quote, her contributions bring benefits

that last longer than her volunteer hours.

“When you put a layer of compost over your soil, you’re basically transporting a metropolis of tiny creatures to your yard.”