



Tom Wentzel

My interest in gardening must be genetic. My father grew up on a farm in Winneconne and always thought our back yard was his farmette. My mother's mother was a lover of African Violets, as was my mother. I do enjoy both indoor and outdoor gardening, but I cannot keep African Violets alive. I've tried to grow orchids, but have had limited success. My niche seems to be with bonsai.

I consider myself to be a generalist gardener rather than specialist. My background is primarily toward the sciences, so I'm more interested in the "why" aspect of gardening rather than "how to" aspects.

A couple of the reasons that I have become addicted to master gardening is that it gave me a chance to meet people and learn things. Helping out at the Farmers' Market information booth is a blast. Everyone is in a good mood and the questions, for the most part, are pretty basic. In 2009, I started the seminar series at the Appleton library. It was definitely a frightening thing at the start, but with the

help and support of a lot of Master Gardeners Volunteers, the program has been a success for not just us, but the library also. This year we'll (hopefully) cross the milestone of 1000 total attendance. Because of the success of our program, the library has dramatically expanded their weekend offerings in other areas. The Master Gardener impact goes beyond gardening.

The big thing this year was the establishment of the Learning Garden. Peg Ebben, Lynn Coffeen, Keith Murdzak and myself designed and installed a Demonstration Garden on the Extension grounds. It was a lot of work getting it going, but now the objective is to make it an educational tool.

The chores that I enjoy most in the garden are weeding (yes I said weeding) and picking fruits and vegetables. I particularly enjoy pulling quack grass in the spring when the ground is cooperative and the rhizomes come out so easily. When I'm not in the garden, I enjoy cooking and wood carving. Mostly I love spending time with my grandkids, ten year old and a set of seven year old triplets. We can make quite a mess of the kitchen making sushi and ravioli from scratch. It's a lot of laughs - that's what life is about.