

# Member Spotlight: *Diane Van Straten*

## Gardening

### How old were you when you started gardening?

I grew up with 10 siblings on a Dairy farm in Wisconsin. I learned to garden very young as we grew and preserved all the fruits and vegetables we needed for our family.

### How did you get interested in gardening and what do you like best about it?

I enjoyed being outdoors and having a variety of fresh produce.

### Who taught you how to garden?

My Mother taught me many of my gardening skills, however, my Grandparents who lived with us on the farm also had a great influence. My Grandfather enjoyed ordering new seed varieties from the seed catalogs which was exciting to see how they would grow and how they tasted.

### What is your favorite gardening activity? (Working with herbs, starting a veggie garden, working in a perennial garden, etc.)

I enjoy being in all the gardens, The herbs for cooking and teas, the vegetables for cooking and preserving for the long winter months and the perennial gardens for all the beauty they bring throughout the whole year, not only with the flowers and color, but all the wildlife they attract.

### What is your favorite style of gardening and why?

I have done several styles of gardens including straw bale gardens, raised bed, trellis for hanging tomatoes and containers for several years. I do not particularly have a favorite for they all are beneficial for what I plant in them. As I age I certainly appreciate the raised beds and straw bales; the containers are great for bringing indoors for the winter months. This year I have placed the straw bales under the trellis with the drip line for watering with the hopes of a covering for a greenhouse in the spring for earlier planting.

### What is your favorite master gardener volunteer opportunity?

I enjoy volunteering at the Plant Sale, Garden Walk, County Fair, anywhere I have the opportunity to meet with others who enjoy talking and learning about gardening.

### Do you have a favorite recipe using fruits and vegetables from your garden?

I have several recipes I enjoy using with produce from the garden, some I make up to go with what I have available. My favorite canning recipes would be a salsa and spaghetti sauce. For fruits I enjoy pies and making wine.



## **Personal**

### **Tell us about your significant other? Kids? Pets?**

I am married. My husband has built me a large raised garden and a trellis with a drip line watering system for the hanging tomatoes. My youngest son is living at home; he has helped me this year with planting, weeding and harvesting from the garden. I enjoy teaching him how to garden; his favorite is the berries which he has been picking since he could walk. We also raise many animals which keep us busy including chickens, ducks, turkeys, goats and emu.

### **What do you do in winter instead of gardening?**

We have a sun room attached to our garage where I winter over many of my plants including flowers and vegetables I have in containers such as peppers tomatoes, herbs etc. It is so great to have fresh vegetables and herbs to cook with in the winter months. I also start planning my seedlings to plant in the spring when all the seed catalogs start to arrive. When possible we visit family and do some hunting.

## **General**

### **If money were no object, where would you vacation to and why?**

### **Why do you like living in this area?**

I like living here in Wisconsin as we can truly enjoy all four seasons and the natural resources we have available. Someday I would like to travel to Alaska.

### **What is something you would like to learn more about?**

I am interested and would like to learn more about hydroponic gardening in the future.