

Newsletter Spotlight: Kathy Shaw

Pat and I have been happily married for over 30 years. We both grew up in Neenah/Menasha and have family nearby. From a garden perspective, we have the clay soils of the area however since we live in the low-lying Rat River valley we also have more loam than usual which makes for “easy” gardening. We don’t have any kids, but have always had pets in our lives. Currently, we have an eight year old Bengal-Maine Coon cat named Boone and a three year old English Springer spaniel named Kirby. Both pets were adopted from the Fox Valley Animal Shelter. This was Kirby’s first summer with us. He is learning how to be a good garden dog and does walk on the garden paths as long as there are no sticks or balls in his vicinity. In my non-gardening free time, I enjoy fishing, camping, road trips and just spending time with my husband Pat. My favorite movies are Young Frankenstein and The Princess Bride; they are both so funny I get hooked into them every time they are on the tube. I’m a science fiction geek and especially like Ray Bradbury, Isaac Asimov and Anne McCaffrey’s Pern novels.



I also have a small business selling soaps, bath and botanical products, some of which are harvested in our back yard, called Island Botanicals. I have dreamt about quitting my day job to grow my bath and body business, perhaps even own a store. I’m also a member of the Greenville Lioness Club and make a mean rhubarb custard pie. The best vacation I’ve ever had was my (fiftieth) birthday celebration shared with Pat and several girlfriends in New Orleans. If money were no object, I would go on vacation to Ireland since Pat and I have always talked about taking a trip there. If money were *really* no object, I’d go around the world in order to experience as many different cultures (and gardens) as possible.

My favorite master gardener volunteer activity is volunteering on the garden walks, because it is the most fun for me. Who wouldn’t enjoy talking about gardens for two hours while standing in a beautiful location? I’ve also found new inspirations for our gardens in every garden we’ve been assigned. My favorite gardening activity is working with herbs, starting a veggie garden, working in a perennial garden, etc. My garden experience started with vegetable gardening and it is still my first love due to the connections I feel to the natural world and to past generations of gardeners/farmers and also for the satisfaction I get growing our own food. I would like to learn more about herbal uses and medications. There is a vast amount of knowledge accumulated over the centuries that I find fascinating and love reading about them. My greatest achievement is fulfilling my desires to become a Master Gardener Volunteer and a test gardener for Organic Gardening Magazine. No kidding. Both were dreams of mine for at least ten years before they were realized.