

MARY GARDENS

Master Gardener Marilyn Putthoff

This spring we were asked to prepare a Mary Garden at Notre Dame Elementary School. We needed to research. Where to begin?

A Mary Garden is a garden dedicated to Mary the Mother of Jesus.

The flowers and herbs planted in the garden have a special significance to the person of Mary, her life or her virtues.

Mary Gardens date back to Medieval Times. Most common people during the Middle Age were illiterate and the flowers with their legends helped keep the stories of Jesus and Mary alive.

The earliest record of a Mary Garden is in Ireland by St. Fiachra in the 7th century.

Several large Mary Gardens are in Ireland and England. In 1932 the Woods Hole garden on Cape Cod was established here in the US.

Other public Mary Gardens are in Annapolis, Maryland and Portage, Michigan.

A Mary Garden can be large or small. It can fill an acre or it can be a statue with one potted plant. They are meant to be a place of peace and reflection.

Hundreds of plants and herbs are on the list of special Mary Flowers. The lily and the rose are probably the two most widely recognized plants. The lily is a symbol of Mary's purity and grace.

The rose is also a special Mary flower. The red rose reminds the gardener of the sorrow she suffered at the death of her son, a white rose is a symbol of her purity and a yellow or golden rose depicts her glory.

As we researched these plants and the special gardens throughout the world we realized that many of the plants on the list were not plants that would grow here in North Texas. We also realized that although we had a large area we needed to keep our selections to several hardy perennials and fill in with some heat tolerant annuals. For our garden we decided to make three roses the main focal points. We chose Earth Kind roses for their durability in our Texas weather. We planted a red Knock Out, a yellow Julia Child and a white Ducher.

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Thanks to the generosity of several local churches we were able to add several dozen white lilies, after Easter. Other perennials were hollyhocks, which are known as St. Joseph's staff, and yellow and purple iris. The purple iris is called "Mary's Sword of Sorrow" and the yellow iris is from a legend of a Knight during the 14th century. We also have several peonies which are called "sharing Our Lady's joy". For this year we have added Dianthus, Rosemary, Marigold (known as Mary's gold), honeysuckle, cannas, zinnias and nasturtiums. This fall we hope to add chrysanthemums and add the tulip and daffodil bulbs.

You can find more information about these gardens by checking out Mary Gardens on the internet. A book by Vincenzina Krymow titled Mary's Flowers by St. Anthony Messenger Press was a tremendous help in doing our research.

Please join the Master Gardeners on July 20th at the Forum, 2120 Speedway, at 10AM for "Latin Names/What's all the stuff on the Plant Tag", with Master Gardener Ruby Adkins. The cost is \$5.00 and benefits our projects in the community.

If you are interested in becoming a Master Gardener, please call the Wichita County Extension Office at 716-8610 to put your name on the list. The cost is \$175.00.