WHAT'S INSIDE:

Save our Town Treasures

Farmland Preservation

Victory Gardeners

Adopt a Town Road

Help out the Bees

Mystery Morels

calls for. In this issue we are presenting activities for the season. This includes hunting for morels and visits to local Vermont gardeners for a varied view of how to do this. Bees recovering from a cold and deadly winter can be seen. We also present important information about zoning for the town and the importance of maintaining Farmland Preservation. We also started a new series about photos and memorabilia from early times in the town. You can contribute to this by sending material to Judy Robb at <u>judy@vandehoney.com</u> or Michael McDermott at mmcdermott75@outlook.com.

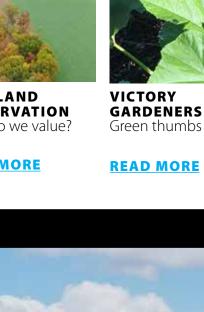
AGRICULTURE • ENVIRONMENT • RECREATION

We hope you enjoy your Springtime and this issue of Vermont's Voice. -Michael



VICTORY GARDENERS Green thumbs **READ MORE**

MYSTERIOUS MUSHROOMS READ MORE





HELP THE BEES

What you can do

READ MORE

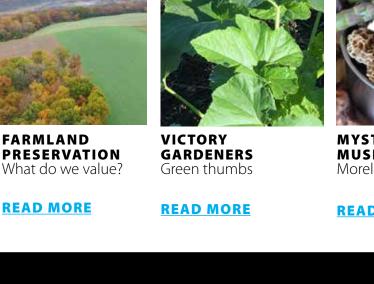
acreage in one of the qualifying

zoning categories, property

owners in the township may

be eligible for a Farmland

Preservation tax credit.





by Michael McDermott The Town of Vermont's Comprehensive Land Use Plan designates the entire township as a Farmland Preservation District. For most of us, the concept of Farmland Preservation sounds like a good thing and we're okay with not being clear on exactly what this designation means to us. The state of Wisconsin created the Farmland Preservation program to encourage municipalities to preserve farmland and to provide a tax credit to farmers. Specific zoning designations determine what land in each county "counts" toward the township maintaining its farmland preservation program status. In order to maintain our designation, the Town of Vermont must maintain 80% of its acreage in a qualifying zoning district. For us, the zoning districts that qualify are FP-35 (FP for Farmland Preservation), FP-1, FP-B and NR-C (Conservancy). Since the Town of Vermont still maintains more than 80% of its acreage in one of the qualifying zoning categories, property owners in the township may be eligible for a Farmland Preservation tax credit. As listed on the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection website, requirements must be met to claim the farmland preservation tax credit: 1. The landowner must have been the owner of the farmland for the year in which the credit is claimed. The landowner need not Since the Town of Vermont still be the farm operator and may rent the land to a farmer. maintains more than 80% of its 2. The landowner must have been a resident of Wisconsin for the

4. The farm must meet applicable state soil and water conservation standards. For exact requirements, contact the county land conservation department in which the land is located. 5. The land produced \$6,000 in gross farm revenue in the preceding year or \$18,000 in gross farm revenue during the preceding three years. If a landowner rents the farmland, the

3. The landowner may not have claimed homestead credit or

veterans and surviving spouses property tax credit for that year.

FARMLAND PRESERVATION:

entire taxable year.

What is it and why is it important?

In addition to the Town of Vermont's designation as a farmland preservation district, the Town also adopted a density policy that results in roughly 35 acres of land remaining undeveloped for each home that is built. On January 1, 1985, landowners were allocated potential development rights based on the contiguous acreage owned at that moment in time. Many residents and property owners in the Town of Vermont value the rural character of the Town. The rural nature of the Town of

Vermont is important for many reasons. Appearance, density, natural features, privacy are all important. Perhaps most important is farming

itself. This is what the nature of our town is based on to be considered If all of the unused 480 potential development rights for

account of by the Planning Commission in zoning change requests.

preserving farming itself is essential to the town's character and the

How can you determine your zoning category and what you can do? First, visit Access Dane (https://accessdane.countyofdane.com). Here

you can look up your property, view your parcel and its zoning. You

Once you know your zoning category how do you determine what

can also see your acreage and assessed valuation.

and papers, military uniforms, quilts and other

The goal is to photograph and digitize relics to

honor personal pieces of American history in our own backyard, with the hopes of sharing

in an exhibit at the Town of Vermont hall and

If you would like to assist with this initiative,

reach out to us at the Vermont's Voice.

O U R P A S T I M E S

know of family relics that may be of interest to others or would merely like to champion the preservation of local historical stories, please

ephemera that document early European

settlers in the Town of Vermont.

possibly beyond.

It is most welcome that there is attention paid to the amount of

land being removed from FP zoning. Beyond zoning formalities

FP designation helps farmers.

rural. As mentioned above, there are four zoning designations that are considered Farmland Preservation: FP-1, FP-35, FP-B and NR-C. The three FP zones have different permitted and conditional uses depending on size and functions. The NR-C indicates natural features and conservation. As each rezoning petition comes through the homes built were used and each parcel pulled just the

Town, here is consideration as to how many acres are being rezoned out of a Farmland Preservation zoning district for housing and in Farmland Preservation as land is rezoned out for housing. The Town two acre minimum out of FP zoning, the Town would has 887. 08 acres remaining that could be rezoned out of FP before fall below the required threshold. we would all below that 80% threshold required for our Farmland

landowner may claim on that land provided the renter meets the gross farm revenue requirement.

Preservation designation. Yet, if all of the as of yet unused 480 potential development rights for home built were used and each parcel pulled just the two acre minimum out of FP zoning, the Town would fall below the required threshold. This is very unlikely in the near future but still there is concern about how to plan and protect the land in FP zoning and thus the Town. At a recent Planning Commission there was discussion about planning and that when applying for a rezone and homesite, attention should be paid to not rezoning more than needed from FP. One applicant was praised for paying strict attention to this. Just over 200 acres were taken out of FP in the last six years. If this **Town of Vermont Farmland Preservation Zoning** rate continues, we would exceed our 887 acres in 20-25 years. There are many considerations to new home siting: view shed, ridgetop protections, driveways and house set back. All are taken into

DISTRICT TWO

is allowed? Here you can see a list of all the Dane County zoning categories, what is permitted regularly and conditionally: (https:// plandev.countyofdane.com/Zoning/Zoning-District-Fact-Sheets). OUR HISTORY SAVE OUR TOWN OF VERMONT TREASURES Do you have old photographs or family artifacts from your ancestral Town of Vermont families? We have begun a town initiative aimed to assist with the preservation of family photographs DISTRICT ONE

beds raked. Check. Survey of the yard situation – did all the perennials make it through the winter? Many of us herald our plant endeavors as Victory Gardens, as did many worldwide in 2020. It seems fitting to offer homage to those WWII garden plots as supplements to our food supply

by Judy Robb

of the first things we planted was Concord Grapes from vines that were 80 years old when I took the cuttings", she says. "Now these vines are 35 years old." The grapes in addition to apple trees were the first things Agnes and Brian planted on their town homestead, and have since added pear, apple, cherry and plum trees.

DISTRICT FIVE DISTRICT SEVEN DISTRICT FOUR DISTRICT SIX DISTRICT THREE With the onset of spring, birds and humans alike are sounding happier, and if you're anything like me you have been plotting and planning your 21 garden strategy since January 1 if not earlier. Seeds started. Check. Greenhouse cleaned out and winter's mouse nests removed. Check. Plant

Farmland Preservation Zoning Districts (FP-1, FP-35, FP-B, NR-C)

Steward of the Land Agnes Kanicula is not only a long-time Vermonter, but she is also what some would say an expert gardener. Nestled at the top of winding road, the homestead and garden reside amongst a hilltop prairie and woods. "One

refrigerator dills. Heavy on the dill and garlic."

Every Day is a Lily Day

Greenhouse Effect

plant sojourn.

and I enjoy searching for new varieties."

"A definite no on tulips," Agnes adds. "They are a deer buffet".

Many in the town know of Judy Urness' beautiful gardens

been planting in my flowerbeds for quite some time. They

filled with prolific Day Lilies. "Day Lilies are what I have

are easy to grow, are in a wide range of beautiful colors

In fact, the offspring of many of her lilies are all around

the Town. When the flower beds burst at the seams, Judy

whilst also boosting our spirit.

VICTORY GARDENERS

Agnes and her family make jelly, juice and wine, using fruit from their trees as well as blueberries and other fruit and of course the prolific blackberry, with one homemade luxury being 'black and blue jelly'. For Agnes, it isn't all about the harvest. "We are stewards of this land. Generations of people have walked here, and I have vowed to care for it as well as I am able."

W took some time this Spring to chat with a few Town of Vermont gardeners, each with their

"I'm a little on the wild side of gardening," Agnes noted. "I don't color within the lines."

resident plants, with rhubarb peeking out from its winter straw covering.

(What gardener in the Town of Vermont cannot relate to this statement?)

The garden is getting taken over by cut flowers, and my favorite is Lisianthus – so elegant".

"We grow vegetables as well, but we have shifted our focus to what we need for a two-year

supply." The conversation shifts to pickles, with Agnes offering "I have a really good recipe for

Walking through the robust garden in early April one takes notice of the special care given to its

own focus of passion for plant companionship. Here are a few snippets of Town garden delights.

shares lily splits with many friends, family and neighbors, and each year you can count on lily greenery as one of the first plants to emerge and bring on spring. "Day Lilies can bloom early, mid-season and late summer into early fall. July is usually the best time for a Day Lily show here in the Town of Vermont!"

When asked what he likes most about being the owner of Vermont View

here like a long lost friend. That's kind of nice."

best succulent selections in the area.

Greenhouse, super-friendly and funny horticulturist and gardening expert Stuart

during the year, I at least see them once or twice in the Spring and they all come in

Petsel says "being in touch with all the neighbors and locals. If I don't see them

"People are looking for something different – not anything in particular, but

different. Like popcorn plants, things that are unusual. We grow everything right

here – either from seed or plugs". Vermont View is also known for having one of the

Stuart loves his work but says watering and having to be at the greenhouse seven days a week this time of year can curb his free time. "It's close to being a dairy farmer. You have to be here every day." "I'm toying with the idea of retiring." Stuart says after all these years he has never finished his own flower beds because doesn't have the time. "I'd like to get to a point that I'm doing what everyone else is doing for myself. I've got an old classic car in the barn that needs finishing. I've got a few other things I'd like to do."

Located on Vermont Church Road, just across from Vermont Lutheran Church, a visit with

Stuart and a bit of shopping in the greenhouse make for a pleasant stop on any gardener's

Got Walnut Trees? You may want to give Straw Bale Gardening a try Bob Bruck has been a Town resident since 1984 and has tended a garden for the last 30 years. For the last three years Bob has been "gardening above ground" – growing vegetables in straw

bales. This approach appealed to Bob due to the location of a number of walnut trees bordering

his garden. The walnuts, although a favorite of our squirrel friends, are not so great for gardening.

"The trees exude a chemical called juglone from their roots that is toxic to many plants.," Bob

As for the results gleaned from gardening in straw, Bob raises tomatoes, a variety of peppers,

broccoli and cucumbers very successfully in the straw bales. He has found that there is no

weeding required, and that the bales are easier to hand water.

yielding the best that he can recall.

to grow vertically," Gary explains.

to be repaired or replaced each year.

bushels of something we had no possible way to eat."

garden and the size and variety of the harvest."

The Flowers are the Thing

Township."

they invite the neighbors and friends to come and pick.

Deb Krebs is a flower gardener. "What was my hobby is now my

passion as I have a beautiful large yard to play in," she cheerily chimed.

Tried and True

property below".

lamented. "Onions and beans are less affected by juglone, so we plant those directly in the soil."

"When the bales are properly prepared, they are warm to the touch which can be an advantage

For Gary and Nancy Cox, establishing a garden was one of their first projects after moving to the Town of Vermont. Located on the top of a ridge, Gary notes "all the good soil is in the neighbor's

in the early part of the growing season," with last year's crop of tomatoes especially successful

"We started out with clay and rock and have built up the soil over the last 25 years. We started small and have tried various gardening techniques over the years --standard roto-tilling folding in horse manure from the neighbors, straw bales, no-till, lasagna gardening." Gary and Nancy settled on mainly raised garden beds that they built from their barn's scrap galvanized panels. They've expanded their garden to its current 50'x 100' size which required a shift to a drip irrigation system to cover the area well and reduce some disease due to soil splashing up on the plants.

"To maximize the space we allotted for the garden, we built many structures and train the plants

Most of the structures are branches from brush clearing projects so they are temporary and need

"We have settled into a tried and true set of crops that grow well for us and that take minimal

day in January. Spring would come and I'd plant two rows of something and one of two things

"We do small hoop structures with a ground cover cloth for things like lettuce and greens. That

allows us to get them started earlier in the spring and extend the season well into December."

One enjoyable aspect of gardening for Gary and Nancy is in the years where a crop does well

"That sharing of produce is one more way we can enjoy the community of living in Vermont

plants, cooking and making medicine."

understand the land and the seasons."

Plants are People Too

and how easy it was to get to know our neighbors."

"I've never done a vegetable garden before" but Clare says she is loving

the process of watching seeds become sprouts and plants. "I want to

Regarding being a Town of Vermonter, "we realize how lucky we are

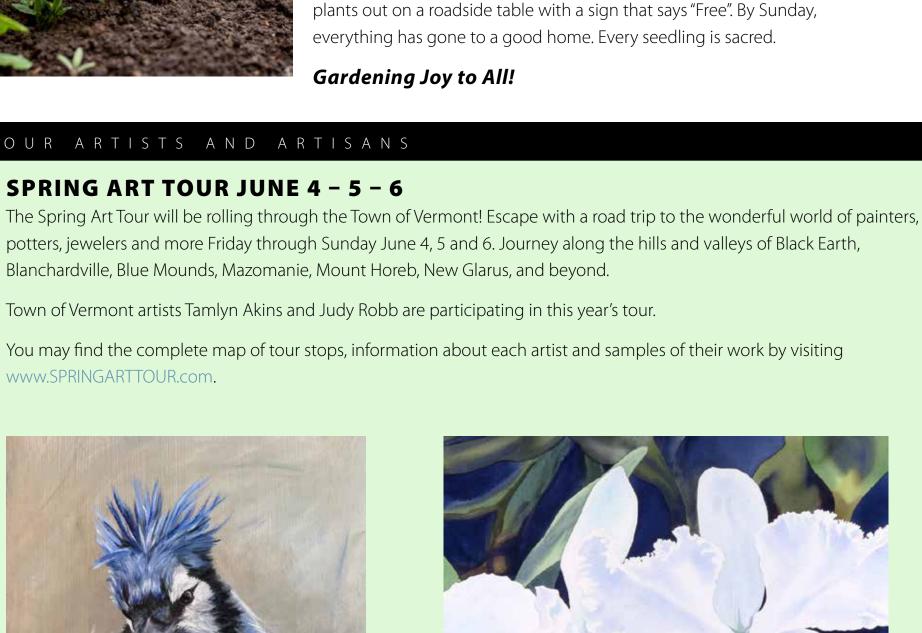
As for this author's gardening, every year I start way too many tomatoes

and pepper plants, and it seems every Memorial Day weekend I leave

"The variety and size of the garden works for us as a balance of the work we want to put into the

care. Early on we would try a new vegetable that we read about in a seed catalog on a dark

would happen: either nothing would come up or everything would go nuts and we have



foodies. As the weather warms, conversations with neighbors evolve from antler shed hunting to morel activity. Have you found any? How many? There's not been enough rain. It's been

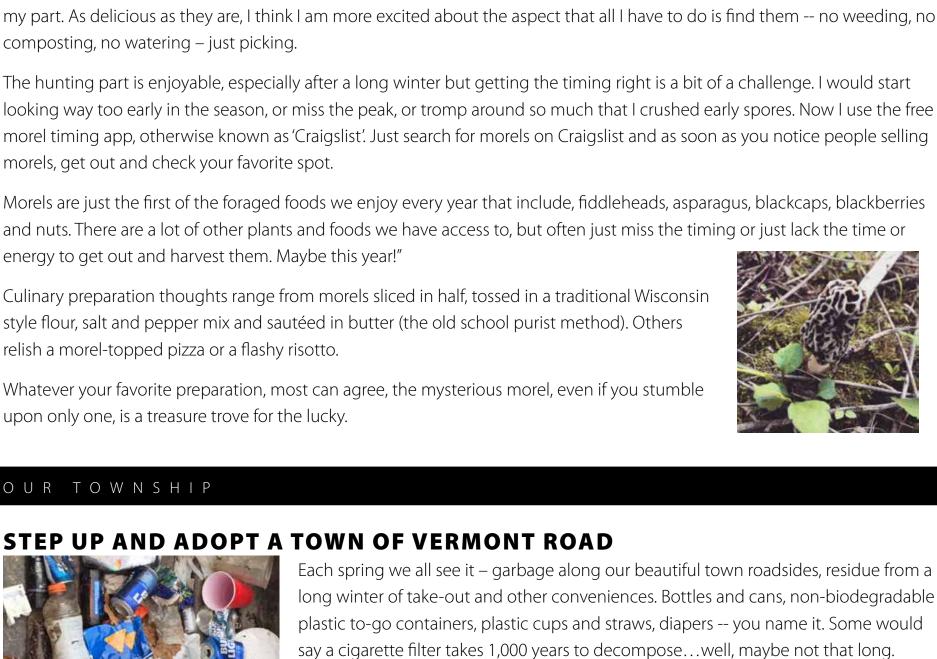
All it takes is a little bit of effort from each of us. If you would like to be part of a more organized effort of fellow volunteers, reach out to Town of Vermont Patrolman, Jack Schulenberg, 608-767-2457. Garbage picked up along Vermont Church Road

NEWSLETTER We need your ideas and photos!



"My favorites are pansies and lilacs to honor my Grammy." Deb also enjoys growing lilies but added "I actually love it all." **Herbaceous Newbie** A self-described herbalist, Clare Kritter is relatively new to the Town. Regarding gardening "I'm attempting. I have a lot of different starts going --culinary and herbal." Clare's goal is to get some of the hardier herbs established this year. "It's a beautiful process – a relationship with

> Blue Jay Study, Oil on Canvas, Judy Robb Opulent Orchids, Watercolor, Tamlyn Akins PASTIMES



Pause for a moment to grab a bag and pick up along nearby roadsides what you can.

For more information on how you can help the bees: visit <u>The Bee Conservancy</u>

The hunting part is enjoyable, especially after a long winter but getting the timing right is a bit of a challenge. I would start looking way too early in the season, or miss the peak, or tromp around so much that I crushed early spores. Now I use the free morel timing app, otherwise known as 'Craigslist'. Just search for morels on Craigslist and as soon as you notice people selling morels, get out and check your favorite spot.

too warm. It's been too cold. When does the season start anyway? Does anyone really know? Opinions vary as to where to find them. For some it is old orchards near dead or dying trees. Others say elm. A sunny slope. Along farm fields or in a totally unthought of location where you least expect it. But don't ask - no one will say for sure. One thing is for certain - once the trees have leaves and the forest earth cools, the morel season is soon to pass. Yes, folks have opinions about their favorite varietal flavors – the small early grays are sweet and delicate. The larger yellow more robust, meaty and earthy. Everyone has their own ideas as to where, when and what is best. Forager Gary Cox offers his take on the mysterious morels: "Each spring I look forward to getting out in the woods and finding those wonderful mushrooms that grow with no effort on my part. As delicious as they are, I think I am more excited about the aspect that all I have to do is find them -- no weeding, no composting, no watering – just picking.

It's a Sunday morning in early May. The sun is shining, and the air is crisply steamy following a good rain.

On a morel mission, hiking up a rocky trail you can feel the earth moving as the culinary delights pop out of the ground.

THE MYSTERIOUS MOREL MUSHROOM

Morel hunting is full of trials and tribulations, agony and defeat, myth and lore. Morels are known to be hidden in places forever secret and

never to be found by humans, but... for the faithful mushroom hunter, a

few go to spots exist in the prairies and sidehills of the Town of Vermont

by Judy Robb and Gary Cox

Or did you just imagine it?

and across the Driftless region.

O U R T O W N S H I P

OUR ENVIRONMENT

A ROUGH WINTER FOR THE BEES

herbicides and general decline in their ecosystems.

As spring emerges, foraging for ramps, fern sprouts,

watercress, nettles and the elusive morel is top of mind for

Here are a few things you can you do to help the bees this Spring, Summer and Fall. • Plant a bee garden, rich in nectar and pollen. Keep the dandelions! They are the bees first food of the year. • Go chemical free for the bees. Think twice before you use chemicals on your lawn or fog your yard before a party. • Create a Bee Bath. Bees work up a thirst foraging and collecting nectar. A shallow bird bath or a bowl with clean water works great. Add some wine corks or rocks for the bees to use as "islands" while they catch a drink.

Support your Local Beekeeper! Buy locally made honey – our beekeepers and bees are working hard for you.

Ask any beekeeper in Wisconsin or in the USA – it was a really bad winter for honeybees and most likely native bees. Many

hives were completely lost due to the extreme cold conditions made worse by bees' low immunity due to pests, pesticides,

Do you have old photographs or family artifacts from your ancestral Town of Vermont families? Or — do you have an up and coming business in the Town of Vermont? An interesting hobby or passion? Know of a long-time resident who has a fascinating story to tell? Contact us and we may include it in an upcoming issue. We'd also love to highlight the variety of views of our township — send us your photos! Contact Micheal McDermott or Judy Robb at the email addresses below. **CONTACT VERMONT'S VOICE**

VERMONT TOWNSHIP BOARD email chair@townofvermont.com email <u>clerk@townofvermont.com</u>

VERMONT TOWNSHIP PLANNING COMMISSION

email plancommission@townofvermont.com

Farmland Preservation 'S INSIDE: - HUME Save our Town Treasures **Victory Gardeners Mystery Morels**

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