



Kevin Milaeger

# Milaeger's

## A Marvelous Community Garden

Kevin Milaeger

I recently returned from a short trip to our family cottage in Sister Bay, Wisconsin. Just a nice walk from our place is a community garden that started up a couple of years ago. It's a great place and I thought you'd like to hear about it. Although it is free and open to everyone, the garden is on the private property of Tom and Carolyn Rehberger. Through the efforts of this generous couple, the "Beach Road Community Garden" at Hidden Acres Farm is available for all to enjoy. The garden is set amidst a group of historic buildings that were once part of a commercial



fish processing facility---my mom (she is from Sister Bay) remembers it still operating in the late 1930's. The buildings have now been restored, no obvious sign of the processing remains, and the site is now a charming and friendly garden.



garden overview

The gardens are a series of raised beds. I didn't count them but there are quite a few. All the beds are about six feet wide, and they vary in length---some are about twenty feet long. The soil in much of Door County is very rocky, so that is possibly one reason they chose raised beds. Also, raised beds are easier to tend, a feature that I appreciate more every

year. A few of the beds are fitted with metal hoops. The hoops will support a temporary plastic covering, not unlike some greenhouses, to protect the plants in colder weather. In these beds are planted plants of tropical origin (such as tomatoes, eggplant, peppers)---they are generally the most cold sensitive. A wide variety of produce is grown at the garden. Summer squash was ready to be harvested when I visited. Also ready were Swiss chard, lettuce, beets, dill and other herbs. Other crops were coming along nicely---



pole beans

tomatoes, beans (bush and pole), peas, peppers, kale, broccoli, cauliflower, eggplant, carrots, and more. A few early crops such as lettuce were already finished by mid-July. The chore list indicated arugula was one of the plants that would partly fill the resulting gaps.



**eggplant**

needed to supplement during dry spells. Another interesting feature on the site is the library. The library is in a little shed, with no locks on the door. The books aren't organized in any particular way, and they are on all subjects. You can pick anything up, or drop anything off at any time. I'm already gathering up some books to donate on my next visit.

I understand an intern is regularly working the garden, but I haven't yet met him. I imagine that between the intern and the owners, decisions are made about what to grow, crop scheduling, crop rotation, and other issues. Volunteers do the usual garden chores; they can then share in the garden bounty. A "chore list" is updated regularly so the volunteers can see what projects need to be done. They are doing a great job---the garden looks immaculate. Seems like every time I visit, nearly all the

work has already been done. As a result, the most I've done is pull a few weeds---I have yet to sample any of the bounty! (I did, however, offer to donate plants.) Often when I visit the Beach Road Community Garden there is someone there, just wandering like me, or busying themselves with various tasks. On my most recent visit someone was tying up the cauliflower (blanching) and fixing the tomato supports. These activities invariably prompt casual conversation, so this is a good



**water tank**



**chore list**

place to get to know your neighbors. Being a summer vacation area, most of the folks are there only occasionally so the garden helps people get connected.

Mid-July in northern Door County means it is harvest time for tart cherries. I enjoy driving around the county and seeing all the cherry trees, loaded with millions of bright red cherries. I planned to pick some





cherries, so I stopped at my cousin's orchard---it's just a mile or so from our cottage. For commercial harvesting they shake the cherry trees, but I didn't need many so I just stood on the ground and picked the easy, low hanging fruit. I left the orchard with a couple pails of cherries---it turned out to be 25 cups---I'm planning on making a big batch of "cherry bounce." Bounce is a



**tomatoes**

homemade concoction that has

been around in various forms for generations---George Washington even made some. It can be made with many different types of fruit, and a wide variety of alcohol. The principal ingredients are cherries, water, sugar, and alcohol (I chose vodka.) There are many recipes out there. Come autumn (the bounce takes a while to "age") there is a bounce tasting competition, complete with prizes, held in Door County. I usually don't sample mine until Thanksgiving---it seems like a holiday beverage anyway, sort of like a cordial. I serve it in a small glass with a few of the actual cherries (watch for the pits!) But be forewarned---the cherries hold the highest concentration of alcohol. Cheers!



**cherry bounce**

Scroll down for more images of this marvelous community garden!

Please email me ([kevin@milaegers.com](mailto:kevin@milaegers.com)) if you have any questions or comments.



**bush beans**





**carrots**



**chard**



**dill & nasturtium**



**squash**



**garden entry**





**garden out-building**



**garden out-building**



**workshop**