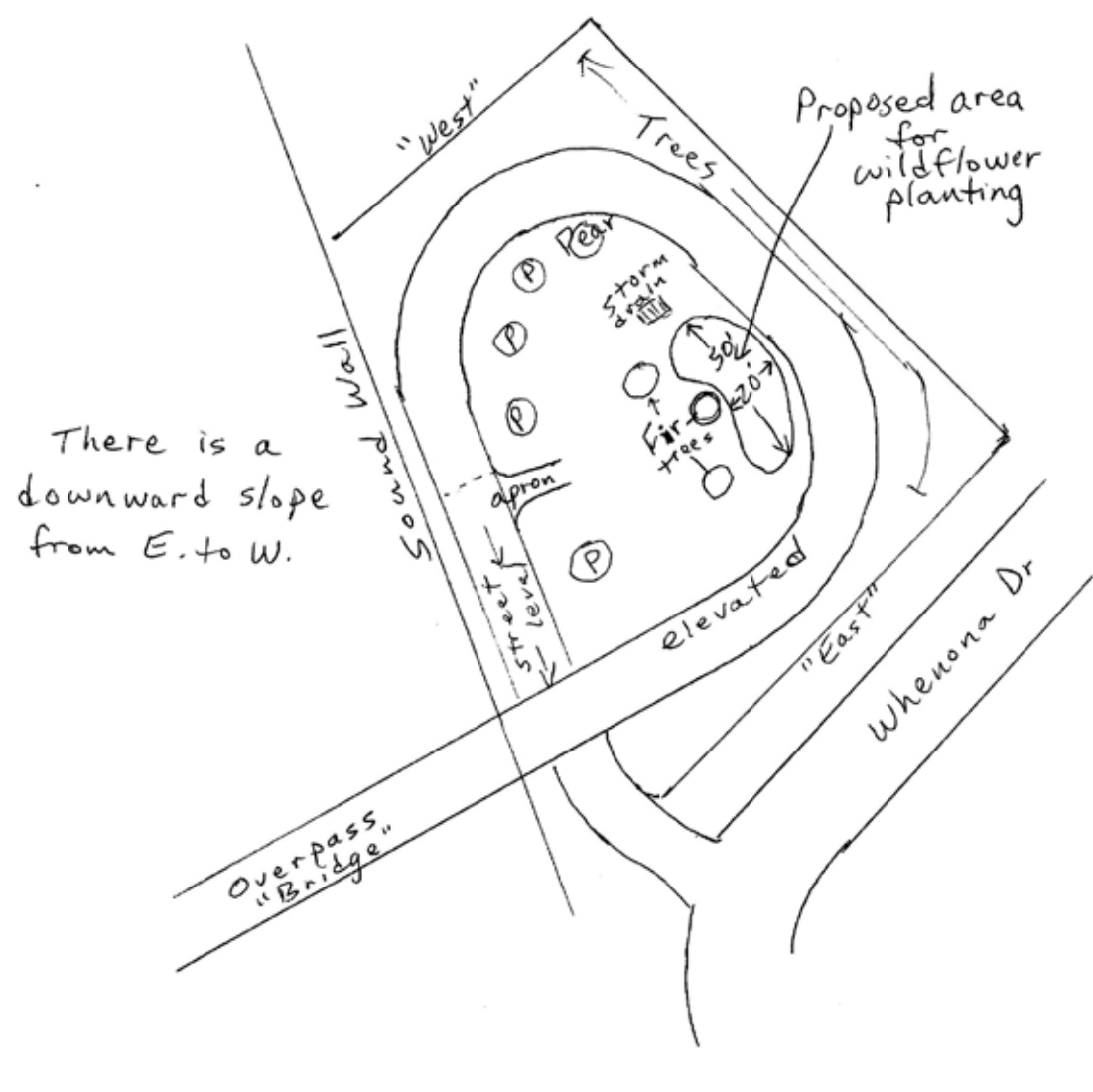


Creating Warwick Way Gardens, a Community Project



Crawford • Marlborough • Nakoma
Neighborhood Association

Sketch of planting area (proposed)



1. The Crawford-Marlborough-Nakoma Neighborhood Association began writing a detailed permit application in February 2017, to create a Butterfly/Pollinator Garden. The public greenspace we had in mind was just north of the Beltline at the bike/pedestrian overpass at Whetona Drive. Thinking that this piece of land was under City of Madison jurisdiction, we filed a City “Application for Privilege in Streets”, but were told by the City Real Estate Office that we needed to apply to the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, “WisDOT.” They took our lengthy application and boiled it down to their “Revocable Occupancy Permit”, which they approved April 4, 2017. We were on our way!



We had approval for approximately 1000 square feet of space, and marked out boundaries with spray paint. Working with City Parks Department, who mow this space, we allowed at least 6 feet for their mowers between our garden boundary and the existing spruce trees and bike ramp structure.

Collecting (i.e. scrounging) and laying down cardboard and wood chips was an effort that took a few weeks and many stalwart volunteers, recruited from neighbors, friends and fellow native plant gardeners. Susan Carpenter and Judy Kingsbury from the U.W. Madison Arboretum provided advice and encouragement.

2. The first few dozen plants, some grown from seed, others purchased or donated, were put in during October and November, through holes punched in the decomposing cardboard. We learned that the “soil” was really mostly compacted gravelly fill dirt, and was very difficult to dig. One of our volunteers specialized in preparing holes for plants with his own unique method! Some of us literally used a hammer to pound on our trowels.

To fully plant this large area, we needed to also use seeds. To do this, we first had to remove some of the excess wood chips so seeds would contact the soil. On November 25, a cold day, we mixed a Seed Mix for Monarchs with cover crop seeds and moist potting mix, and did our best to sow them evenly across our space. We then spread weed-free straw from Little Bluestem grass, and waited for Spring. Approximately 124 volunteer hours and \$173 had been spent in 2017.





3. During the Spring and Summer of 2018, we were thrilled to see that many of our plants survived their first Winter and had come back up. With help from neighborhood youth and a Girl Scout Troop, we filled in gaps with 96 donated plants from Dane County's Plant Dane program. A Ninebark shrub, known for tolerating poor soil, was planted. Many kinds of mustards, clovers, non-native grasses, and curly dock needed to be weeded out. The native plants persisted, and the blooms brought in bumble bees, wasps, soldier beetles, and a few Monarchs. We had a great yellow and purple display of Black-eyed Susans and Asters for our very first Open House in October. In 2019 we continued weeding and adding plants, and were able to identify more species coming up and blooming. We were up to 50 or more different plant species. Bumblebees, moths, butterflies and dragonflies were seen frequently.



4. Our big new effort in 2019 was the construction of a Rain Garden! After on-site visits and consultations with a WisDOT engineer, and great advice and support from Landscape Architect and retired Arboretum Program Manager Molly Fifield Murray, we chose a location in a low area downslope of the existing Pollinator Garden. A permit application was again filed. The area was where a lot of water coming off the bike ramp tended to form puddles, some of which drained into a nearby storm sewer. In April a test hole in this area showed an infiltration rate of about 0.7 inches per hour, which is sufficient for a rain garden. A kidney bean shaped area of about 220 square feet was marked out. Based on the DNR Rain Garden Manual, a much larger area might actually be needed, but any size rain garden was better than nothing!

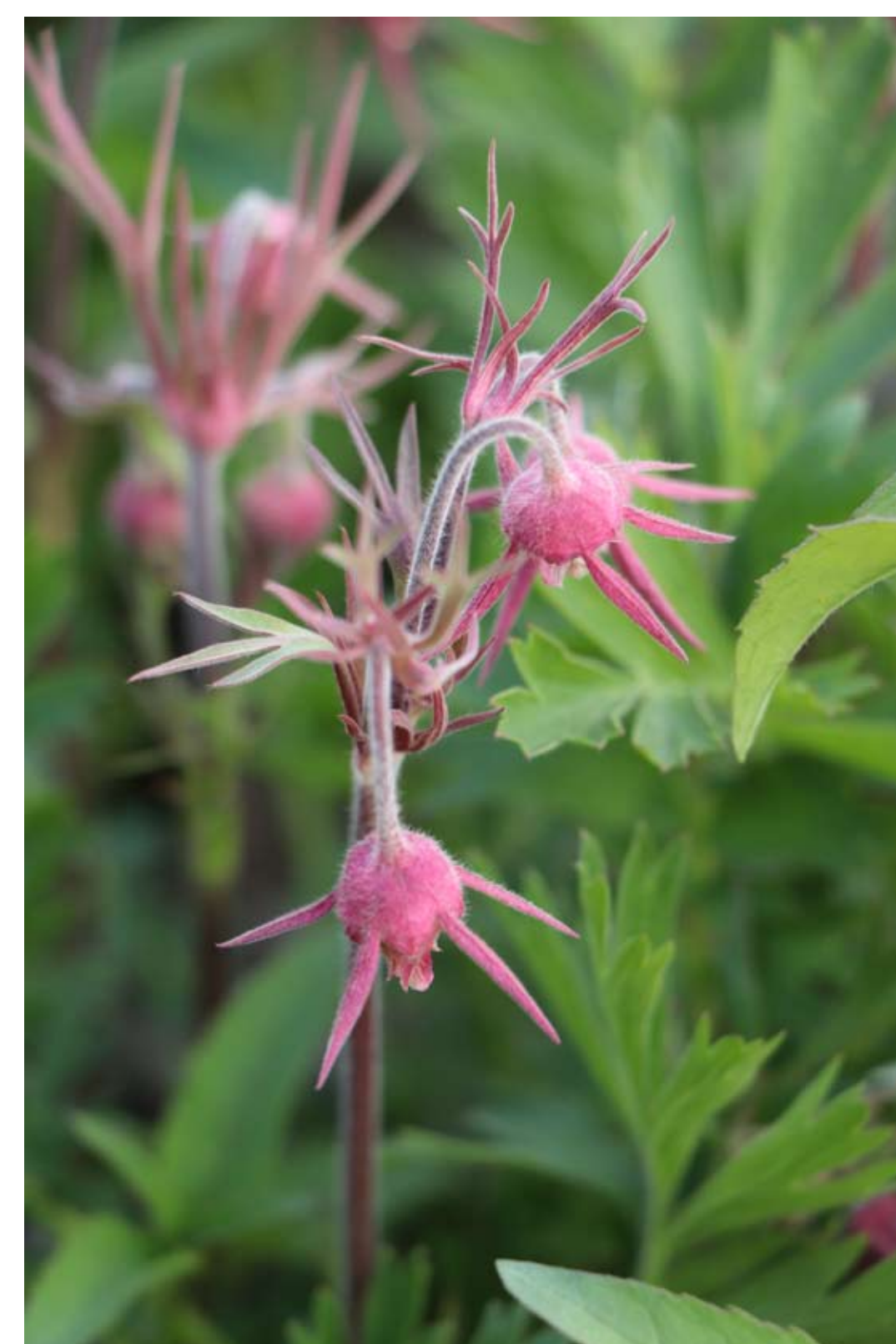


5. In mid-August, we had the incredible good fortune to enlist a volunteer with a Bobcat, who made a shallow excavation following our marked boundaries, and who also removed five invasive Bradford Pear trees. A group of 8 or so volunteers spent some tough and hot hours that first day, breaking up heavy clay and pulling out sizeable rocks. (Very unlike the “silty soil” we thought we saw in our test hole!) Persistence paid off, as we managed to get two shrubs and 160 plants put in that first day. We divided the area for planting into concentric “zones” based on levels of moisture we expected, and placed our plant species accordingly. The fist-sized and larger rocks we pulled out were used to provide a rock border. We had good rains in the next few days, and water ponded in the rain garden, but soaked in completely within 24 hours. More planting followed in September and October, with a total of 290 plants and 29 species put in.



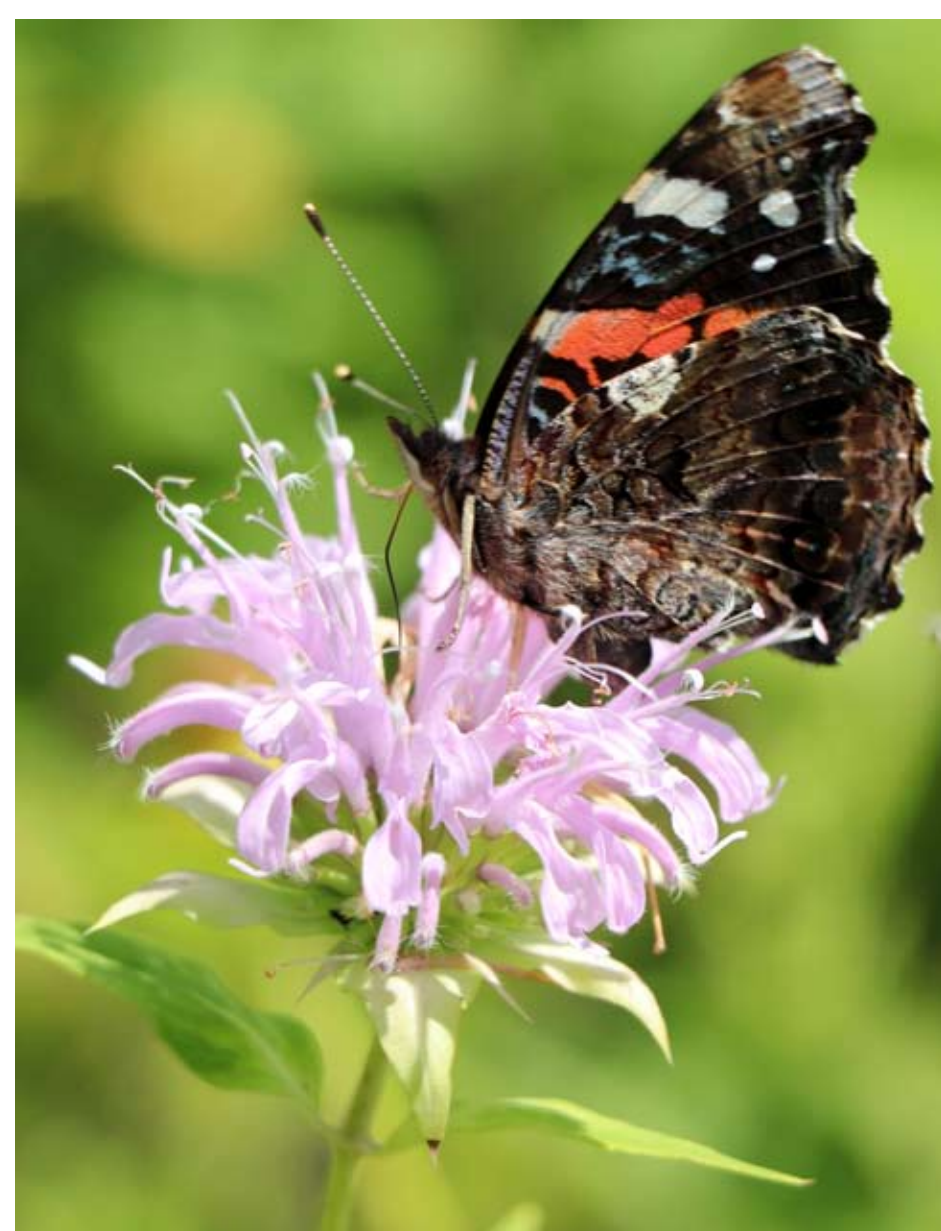
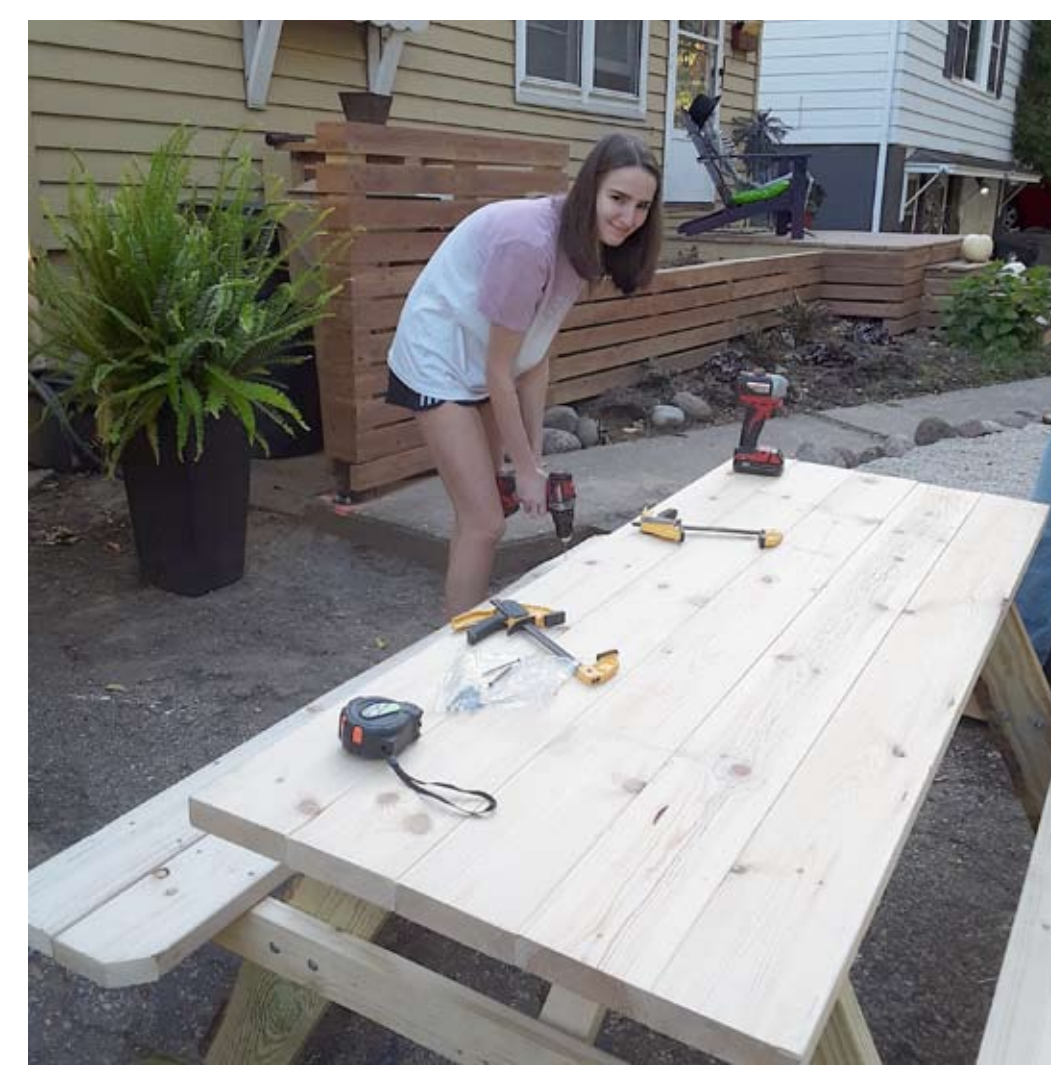
6. Despite the Covid-19 lockdown in early 2020, our determined CMNNA Board went ahead in March with an application for a City Planning Department grant for neighborhood projects. Our goals were to improve communication with our residents by establishing outdoor message boards at the Gardens and elsewhere, and to improve the Gardens by providing a table, benches, and educational signs for our residents, and to add wildlife habitat. While our application made its way through the grant process, we were able to continue working at the Gardens in smaller groups, wearing masks and social distancing.

Meanwhile, our native plants in both the Pollinator and the Rain Garden continued to flourish, beginning with May blooms of wild strawberry, Prairie Smoke, and Jacobs Ladder. June and July brought Monarch, Black Swallowtail, and Silver-spotted Skipper butterflies, as well as Widow Skimmer and Twelve-spotted dragonflies. Susan Carpenter did a survey and identified four species of bumble bees. In August the City Parks Department donated a generous load of wood chips, which allowed us to spread mulch over all the bare dirt under the ramp structure, and around the new shrubs that replaced the Bradford pears.





7. In August of 2020 our grant of \$3800 received approval, and by September and October we were busy carrying out several of our projects. A young neighbor assembled the picnic table from a kit. Post holes were dug with an auger, posts anchored in cement, and the message boards and bat house were assembled and installed. A bird house was donated and hung from a tree. Design and editing of interpretive signs was underway.



8. In early 2021 our beautiful interpretive signs illustrating and explaining the benefits of the Pollinator and Rain Gardens were received. In May these were installed. A Leopold bench was also built and installed. On June 12 we held an Open House. We had good weather for this event, and a good turn-out of neighbors, native plant enthusiasts, our City Alder, and folks from the very supportive City Planning Department. We gave away seedlings and plants, served refreshments, and held children's activities. As part of this celebratory event, CMNNA President Mary Odell issued a proclamation, officially naming our park-like space the Warwick Way Gardens.



The efforts of many came together to create this welcoming space. In addition to the grant from the City of Madison Planning Department, we had monetary donations from neighbors and gardening volunteers, as well as in-kind donations of materials, shrubs, and plants. We have had plant donations from Plant Dane, planting advice from U.W. Madison Arboretum experts and others, Right-of-Way permits from Wisconsin Dept of Transportation, and good cooperation from Madison Parks Department. Steve Glass, Rachel Barker, Susan Rutter, Mary Mullen and Carol Buelow contributed photos for this poster display. We also thank Sandy Stark and Jacob Blaszczyk for their support and encouragement. Perhaps most importantly, many gardening volunteers and neighborhood association members contributed hundreds of hours carrying out these projects, and creating and maintaining the gardens. We thank you all.