



For residents of Staten Island's North Shore, a day of gardening



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Advance photo/Derek AlvezVolunteers Jim

Carter and Ashley Davis plant flowers at the Hillside Community Garden at the corner of Corson and Westervelt avenues.

STATEN ISLAND, N.Y. - NORTH SHORE - Saturday was the Day of the Garden on Staten Island's North Shore.

More than 100 residents in this section of the borough spent their morning outside donating their time to tend community gardens in an effort to make their neighborhoods green.

It was a coincidence of timing that is also symbolic: Mothers Day equates, in this part of the world, with the traditional start of gardening season.

As tulips and forsythia all over the North Shore gave way last week to lilacs, irises and azaleas, gaps in the rain drew gardeners out to set the stage for more.

On Saturday, volunteers gathered in Tompkinsville, New Brighton, Westerleigh and Castleton Corners to sweep, till,

plant, weed, and build on their sense of community.

In Castleton Corners, about 20 volunteers put plants and seeds into the Staten Island Moravian Community Garden, which includes six raised beds built to be handicapped-accessible. Altogether, that garden has 33 garden plots - 12 set aside for private harvesters and 21 designated for Project Hospitality's needs. Last year, the group sent that agency's soup kitchen and food pantry 1,092 pounds of produce, said co-pastor Lynette Delbridge for Castleton Hill Moravian Church.

BOUNTIFUL HARVEST

Garden volunteers wearing sun hats and jeans soaked with mud at the knees joined Pastor Adolf Pagliarulo and members of the Reformed Church of Prince's Bay to celebrate the founding of their "Bountiful Harvest" garden on Tompkins Circle, Tompkinsville. Its bounty will go to feeding the hungry through Project Hospitality and St. Paul's Methodist Church in Tottenville.

"We ask that our love for one another may grow; we ask that our love for the homeless will grow; we ask that Your Spirit take root in us," the Rev. Pagliarulo said in an opening prayer before a sign was unveiled, marking the ministry of "The Church that Never Sleeps."

"The idea of doing something that is simple, natural and real as making food for people has always appealed to me," said chief gardener John Reig of Prince's Bay, "And I wanted to do something that was selfless."

He joined Sandra Bentsen of Prince's Bay, Thomas Bonelli of Annadale, and Lynn Brandkamp of Clifton in planting the first row of carrots in a lot overlooking the Narrows that had been previously overgrown with weeds. In Westerleigh Park, Goldman Sachs sent a team of volunteers to join the regulars who convene at the park every Saturday morning for community-service projects there - planting petunias and impatiens.

'SPIT SHINE'

Some 50 volunteers were deployed on Corson Avenue to clean an entire block that New Brighton organizer John Kilcullen said really needed a "spit shine."

Two teams started their day at 9 a.m. on either end of Corson: One at Pine Street, the other at Daniel Low Terrace. They met at the new Hillside Community Garden at the corner of Westervelt, where they planted begonias, alyssums, cannas, dianthus and gazanias.

The effort, organized by the Corson Avenue Block Association and the St. George Civic Association, was part of a

"Love My Block" contest orchestrated by the Citizens Committee for New York City (CCNY). Twelve neighborhood gardens that received small grants from CCNY are competing, through this program, for a larger grant - several thousand dollars that could launch another North Shore community garden.

Saturday's event brought together dozens of residents of Corson Avenue and beyond, plus a few representatives from the Department of Transportation and the Sanitation Department.

"A lot of us had never even met each other," said one Corson resident, Leslie Greenwood.

"People often want to do something in their communities and are not sure what they can do," said CCNY president Peter Kostmayer, on hand with a team of judges to assess the process and the product of the gardening project.

As patches of the North Shore transformed, Christine Gross of New Brighton and her 2-year-old daughter, Eva, went outside with a small mesh caterpillar tent, and let five monarch butterflies go.

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