

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

On Friday, my aunt and I visited some of the gardens in the Friends of Kickapoo Valley Reserve Garden Walk. Some of the gardens were especially beautiful, with flowers, prairie grasses, majestic views, and more.

Prior to Friday, I had known that vines could climb on objects, as I had seen vines climbing up the sides of buildings. (See photo #1 from the International Gardens in La Crosse.) But what I did not recall ever seeing, were vines forming the shape of a tree! (See photo #2, Middle Ridge Road, Friends of KVR Garden Walk 2021.) Since I don't recall ever seeing anything like this, I don't even know its name! For the purposes of this letter, I am calling it a "vine tree."

The woman who gave my aunt and I a tour of the "vine tree" garden, said that she plants the pods that grow in the center of the vine's blossoms. Each year, she plants pods from the tree. Each year, it grows larger. When I looked at it from a distance, I noticed that it was almost like a sculpture! Some sections were larger and some smaller. The "vine tree" actually seemed to be contoured, because the vines can grow to the right, to the left, up, sideways, or in a diagonal direction! And from many, many vines, over many, many years, the "vine tree" has flourished!

When I look at the vines in the photos, I am reminded of some of the vines described in the Bible. A passage that celebrates God's gift of good land and God's provision for the Israelite people, is found in Deuteronomy 8:6-10 (NRSV). It reads as follows:

Therefore keep the commandments of the Lord your God, by walking in his ways and by fearing him. For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land with flowing streams, with springs and underground waters welling up in valleys and hills, a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, a land where you may eat bread without scarcity, where you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron and from whose hills you may mine copper. You shall eat your fill and bless the Lord your God for the good land that he has given you.

Seeing the "vine tree," the beautiful gardens, the lovely views from the Middle Ridge, and so much more, made me especially grateful for all that God provides for us. Let us give thanks and praise to God for the beauty of God's creation today and always!

Peace,

Pastor Cathy

