



September 2009



“September!” cries Daisy.
“Come one and all
for a harvest picnic to welcome fall.
What could be better,
as summer ends,
than feasting and dancing
with all our friends?
“Everything’s ready,
ripe and sweet.
There’s nothing to say,
except, “Let’s eat!”
And thank you, each,
for all you’ve done.”

excerpted from *Daisy’s Garden* by Mordicai Gerstein
(New York: Hyperion Books for Children, 1995)

Author Mordicai Gerstein surely had the Blackbird Paradise Community Garden in mind as he penned these lines of “Daisy’s Garden.” Everything is indeed ripe and sweet in the garden: squash, cucumbers, herbs, cabbage, lettuce, beans, peas, and even tomatoes – despite the blight that destroyed so many of the tomato plants in the area. And, as we gather again with our friends and teachers to hit the books, the Garden Committee is busy planning a Harvest Festival for plenty of feasting and dancing. A heartfelt thank you goes to each and every one of you who has helped make the Blackbird Paradise such a success.

A steady supply of adult and child volunteers have tended the garden seven days a week for the entire summer. They kept the garden watered, harvested, free of weeds, and – with the help of 1,500 ladybugs and 1,000 green lacewings – free of insect pests. In addition to the great pride of maintaining Blackbird Paradise, these volunteers found their time at the garden to be a wonderful way to socialize with other community

members. The volunteers were also invited to tour the Tawasentha Community Gardens. Volunteers are needed to help through October, so there is still plenty of time to get hands-on in the garden!

Speaking of community interaction, the reach of Blackbird Paradise extended to an international level. Visitors from near (Voorheesville, Bethlehem, Guilderland, and Albany) and far (Michigan, Texas, California, and even Greece) wandered through our garden, all expressing their delight and amazement. The Garden Committee is working on a guest sign-in book to capture future visitors' comments and to serve as a reminder that the world is not such a big place after all. One small garden in Voorheesville can impact someone from across "the big pond!"

Locally, the impact of our community garden has been significant. The New Scotland Community Food Pantry was the recipient of much produce over the course of the summer, and now that school is back in session, Chef Tim Mulligan will be using fresh salad greens and other garden items in the cafeteria. Mrs. Fitzgerald's summer program planted a pizza garden culminating in a pizza party on August 11. Catnip and lavender has been harvested, is now drying, and will be available to our students for assembling crafts during the winter. The Elementary School library is planning to devote a corner to the Garden Project where complete lesson plans utilizing the garden will be available as well books on gardening and cooking. To top it all off, we welcomed our new principal, Mr. Reardon, with a basketful full of fresh vegetables!