

# Bridge construction done, Stillwater roadside features sunny flower garden



Becci Dawson Cox, left, and Marlys Sturm with some of the daffodils they helped plant at the corner of Minnesota 95 and Lookout Trail in Stillwater. Members of the Daylily and Trillium chapters of the Perennial Garden Club of Stillwater planted about 1,000 daffodil bulbs last fall on the highway right-of-way on the west side of Minnesota 95, south of the Oasis Cafe. (Scott Takushi / Pioneer Press)

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Eventually there could be a sea of daffodils greeting visitors as they drive into Stillwater in the springtime.

This spring, however, there are just a couple dozen of those sunny yellow flowers blooming at the corner of Minnesota 95 and Lookout Trail.

Members of the Daylily and Trillium chapters of the Perennial Garden Club of Stillwater planted about 1,000 daffodil bulbs last fall on the highway right-of-way on the west side of Minnesota 95, south of the Oasis Cafe. The Minnesota Department of Transportation used the land as a staging area for equipment while building the new St. Croix River bridge in Oak Park Heights.

“Daffodils are one of the first signs of spring, which is eagerly anticipated,” said Becci Dawson Cox, a Stillwater resident who led the push for the new garden. “This whole area has been so torn up for so long ... we wanted to do something that would help the approach.”

Cox said she came up with the idea of the garden after reading about a daffodil festival in Bayfield, Wis., and a gateway garden welcoming people to Northfield.

Garden club members approached city officials in early 2016 with the idea. They then worked with MnDOT officials, who suggested the land south of downtown.



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Cox said the planting of the bulbs in October 2016 was a group effort: The bulbs were donated by the Minnesota Daffodil Society, city crews cleared the land and provided mulch, and garden club members did the planting and spread bone meal.

The daffodils are a late variety and just started sprouting two weeks ago; more should continue to bloom in the weeks to come, said Marlys Sturm, who also helped with the project.

During a visit to the garden earlier this week, Sturm confided that Cox was worried because it took so long for the daffodils to bloom this spring.

“They’re coming, Becci! Look!” Sturm said, pointing to a clump of tiny flowers. “You can see them all over. They’re coming! That’s kind of a neat thing because then the blooming will be spread over a longer period of time.”

Daffodils were the ideal choice for the site because deer, squirrels and other animals don’t eat them; the flowers and the bulbs contain a toxic chemical called lycorine.

Cox and Sturm say they would like to continue planting daffodils in the area and eventually extend the planting area to both sides of Minnesota 95.

“I like their brightness and cheerfulness,” Sturm said. “They are a beautiful sign of spring. The whole intent is to welcome people into Stillwater.”

Cox, who lives on the city’s North Hill, recently won the Outstanding Volunteer Award from the Federated Garden Clubs of Minnesota for her work on the project.