

Along the Trail

by Vera Blaine

My favorite time of day is the time I can spend outdoors, especially walking the trails in our Windsor West and along the Highline Canal, weather permitting. Usually along the way my first stop is at the gardens of Windsor Garden residents. Here on a picnic bench in the shade of a small shelter I can watch the gardens as they grow. Often there will be four or five people bending over pulling weeds or busily watering and tending their special plot in the morning sun.

They all have two obstacles in common, the voles that live underneath the soil and nibble the roots of the new sprouts, and all the rabbits who also feast on the tender plants. The rabbits enjoy most the tender young beans and may nibble a little at bright green lettuce. One gardener had placed an attractive wire fence around her garden plot but was disheartened to see the next day that rabbits had consumed the row of radishes that were only an inch tall. These were special radishes called watermelon radishes that would have the melon colored interior instead of the common red radish with white inside. One morning in the vicinity very close to the gardens I saw one tiny rabbit, three medium sized and another full grown rabbit, all very tame, happy in their environment.

The gardeners tell me that all is no utopia for the rabbits because roving coyotes are busy trying to cut down the rabbit population and that a pair of hawks has been nesting in nearby trees, another enemy.

More than half of the Windsor West property is considered a wetland. Some standing water has been overgrown with what I call “cattails” as I don’t know the scientific name. These attract the red-winged blackbird whose call my father taught me, and one of the few bird calls I know. The trails wind through many growths of trees clustered together that provide homes for the squirrels and a variety of birds and wildlife. You can hear the songs and calls of many birds. In early spring the Russian olive trees are covered with tiny yellow, fragrant blossoms. This wild growth of trees, shrubs and grasses is not the place you want to be if you have hay fever.

The prize winner, in my opinion, is the profuse growth of the wild sweet pea with its gorgeous magenta blossoms. This, too, grows wild among the tall grasses along the trail at the south end of the property.

At this point I can enter the Highline Canal Trail and will have to check on the tall, flowering quince shrubs that have completed their spring flower show. I am told they produce small tasty fruit. I need to check this well before the squirrels, and/or humans, beat me to it.