

Pelican Woods Cemetery and Nature Trail at Breezy Point near Pelican Lake.

General Overview:

Pelican Woods Cemetery is all about nature. Walking the trail around the perimeter of the property is a good way for visitors to breathe deep and relax. The Trail Stations have been designed to enhance the natural beauty of this unique setting; visitors find familiar and unfamiliar trees, flowers and greenery which grow well in Northern Minnesota's harsh climate.

The cemetery is owned and managed by the City of Breezy Point, led by a group of volunteers on the Cemetery Commission. Landscape gardens have been planned and developed by a team of Crow Wing County Master Gardeners, who have worked together on the project since 1999. While mowing, fertilizing, and "heavy" landscape maintenance work are handled by a contract employee, volunteers come weekly for maintenance and planting sessions. At least one Master Gardener has been on site to guide volunteer activities during the weekly work sessions, and plantings are well cared-for throughout the summer.

The public is invited to walk in the cemetery daily, throughout the year; during the summer it is estimated that at least 50 persons visit each week. This year, over nearly 200 people attended the annual program featuring a butterfly release and patriotic tribute. One of the goals of the event is to introduce the public to the nature trail and cemetery gardens. Crow Wing and Cass County Master Gardeners are always on hand with an information table at the butterfly release.

Trail Station Guide:

Entry Garden Northern-hardy shrubs and trees are planted on both sides on the cemetery entry. The center island garden has been planned for colorful blooms from May through frost and features perennial flowers (hardy in USDA Zone 3), along with some herbs and annuals. In 2006, minimal maintenance was required; cedar chip mulch was replenished in early summer, plants were groomed regularly, and plans were started for dividing large plants in spring 2007.

Fern Glen Along the Nature Trail, left of the entry, the fern glen was started in 2005. Dozens more plants were added in 2006, including native bittersweet vines to accent the entry arbor. Examples of 10 varieties of native ferns, along with other natives grow amid mature birch trees.

Quiet Corner As the name suggests, the Quiet Corner overlooks the cemetery with a peaceful view. First planted in 2003 with plants which survived in dry conditions, a broader variety of perennials were planted after water sprinklers were added in 2005. Dwarf evergreens and flowering shrubs were added to the hillside garden, and many of the plants from the nursery area were added in 2006. Enlargement of the hillside garden and sprinkler changes are planned for 2007.

Shelter Area Garden

The covered structure surrounded by lawn and plantings may be used for services as well as providing a place for reflection. Plantings are examples of plants that flourish in the sunny conditions. A grant from the Department of Natural Resources in 2004-05 helped fund the purchase of native perennials and grasses for this area, and this year the maturing plants were quite showy.

Wildflower Meadow This colorful areas has been a welcome addition to the Cemetery. Planted from seed in 2001, with additions in 2005 and 2006, most of the perennial wildflowers are native to Minnesota. A colorful display begins here in July and continues until frost. A path and seating areas are also in place.

Native Grass Demonstration Area This trail station was planted with over 1000 native grass seedlings this year. This accomplishment involved contract staff for soil preparation, plus the hands of about a dozen volunteers, supervised by Master Gardeners.

Shady Hollow Clearing began in 2004 to make an opening in the woods to better view the natural wetland. Volunteers discovered ferns and many spring-blooming wildflowers; more plants have been added. Bloom time here is in May and June; and many of these become dormant in mid-summer. Native holly and several other plants were added this year and the path was improved.

Native Tree Walk This year the native tree walk has been expanded to include twenty native tree species along the entire nature trail. A new brochure with information about the native trees was developed by Master Gardeners, and copies are available in two places along the trail.

The Plant Nursery This area has been totally re-done this summer. Volunteers removed and re-planted the grown seedlings and plant divisions in this 20' by 50' area, and contract staff used heavy equipment to level the area. Several rows of collected wildflower seeds were planted, and path areas were covered with landscape fabric to reduce weed growth. Sprinkler changes will be made in 2007.