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When you see something that needs doing, just do it.

That was the attitude of Grand Rapids Township resident Cynthia Smith when she planted herself in the Township Supervisor's office and asked if she would be allowed to do some landscaping around the ridge viewing area of the Township's Crahen Valley Park.

Smith has lived with her family for over 26 years just off Leonard Street, near Forest Hills Northern High School. For her, gardening is a passion and her yard is filled with colorful perennials.

She lives within walking distance of the township's newest park - the 205 acres known as Crahen Valley Park. "Every time I went there, I thought I should weed this," she said, noting that gardeners generally have a hard time walking past without pulling a weed or two.



*Grand Rapids Township resident and gardener
Cynthia Smith*

"It is such a pretty place and I know people use it," she said. "There is nice bench and I thought to myself, 'It just looks terrible.'"

One day she reached down to pull a couple weeds and just "kept pulling." Then, thinking she might need approval, she drove to the town hall to talk with Supervisor Michael DeVries. She showed him pictures of her yard and gained Township approval to spend a little money on plants to spruce up the ravine overlook.

She knew she was facing hand surgery in a short period of time, so immediately filled her Jeep with flowers and native grasses that she knew the deer wouldn't destroy.

The overlook is now filled with cone flowers, catmint, Russian Sage, coreopsis, Black Eyed Susans, and similar perennials, which Smith hopes will spread and take over the area in the next few seasons.



Flowers planted by Smith

In anticipation of a Tuesday surgery, she worked the very hot humid second week of October. She would like to "do the other side" next year and has had some folks passing by as she worked offer to help her in the future. She believes her effort has paid off already and was thrilled to see several high schoolers taking their homecoming pictures at the overlook in the last couple of weeks.

Smith has had a number of surgeries throughout the years and has often experienced mobility issues. She said of this effort, "I spend a lot of time laid up and when I am feeling up to it, I want to be productive and do something worthwhile, and I just like things to look pretty."

Crahen Valley Park is located between Leonard Street and Crahen Avenue and has entrances from both streets. Future plans include year-round restrooms, walking trails, fat-tire bike trails and cross country ski trails.

View overlooking the park from the southern end

