



Ursuline Sisters
of Mount Saint Joseph

“Around the Farm”

August 2015

Each month for the coming year, a different aspect of the Maple Mount, Kentucky, farm will be highlighted in this feature.

When Sister Grace Swift gets in a jam, everyone else is usually happy. That’s because Sister Grace’s jams are made from the grapes she helps grow on the Maple Mount farm. Sister Marcella Schrant takes those same grapes and makes jelly from them, and both sisters produce a whopping supply to sell in the Crafts booth at the Mount Saint Joseph Picnic.

“Sometimes I pick some nice ones for the sisters to eat,” Sister Grace said. “Sisters who had grapes on the farms when they grew up are wild about them.”

The Mount is home to several varieties of grape: Steuben, Sunbelt, Buffalo, Niagara and a few unknown types. But it’s the Concord grapes that have been growing at the Mount for 50 years that remain the best, Sister Grace said.

“Grapes are very labor intensive,” Sister Grace said. “I admire those guys in the bible who had vineyards, they didn’t have the clippers I have.” One of Sister Grace’s friends gave her the book, “The Vine Speaks,” a bible study from John 15:5, “I am the vine; you are the branches.”

Sister Grace spends many days weeding the grape vines, and she does a major pruning twice a year, one in February and the other at the end of August when the growing season ceases. “Two local men who grow grapes for winemaking showed me how to prune properly,” she said. She also attended a class on pruning in Henderson, Ky.

Jam and jelly is made the same way to start, by cooking the grapes to soften and then pouring them into a colander to let the juice strain through. To make jam, Sister Grace presses the pulp through the colander, but Sister Marcella just uses the juice to make jelly. They then add sugar, some lime juice and pectin. Sister Grace said she made 27 jars of grape jam for the picnic, while she expects Sister Marcella made 50 jars of jelly. “We’re always happy to get a donation of half-pint jars,” Sister Grace said.

Sister Marcella said she’s been making jelly for 10-12 years. “It’s a relaxing thing and people enjoy eating it so much,” she said.

Growing grapes helps Sister Grace feel a kinship with Saint Angela Merici, who had a vineyard. “When I get a problem with the grapes, I ask Saint Angela to solve it,” she said. “We always get grapes.” ❀



The Mount farm has numerous grape vines that are tended by Sister Grace Swift. Left: Sister Grace removes stems from grapes she picked on Aug. 12. Below: Sister Marcella cooks the grapes in a small kitchen in Paul Volk Hall on Aug. 13.



Before & After: Homemade grape jam and jelly