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By MARGARET MILLER

Women on the Go

Our Betty Frankel A Top Garden Writer



BETTY FRANKEL amid the trilliums in her wooded yard. (Observer photo)

As a child in upstate New York, Betty Frankel loved to plant flowers and try to rescue dying trees. She also thought she might like to write children's stories someday. Now, as a Farmington resident wife and mother, she's brought the two interests together as Observer Newspapers' chronicler of matters pertaining to gardens and gardening.

Her special ability to make such early subjects clear and fascinating was recognized last week by the Michigan division of the Woman's National Farm and Garden Association, which made her one of four top award winners in its first competition for Michigan garden editors and writers.

BETTY RECEIVED her trophy, topped with a gilded rose, during the organization's awards luncheon in Grand Blanc last Thursday. She had entered feature stories printed in this newspaper.

"It's the first award I've won," she said. "It should go well with my son's Little League trophies."

Mrs. Richard Frankel talked of her interest in both gardening and writing in the living room of her home deep in the woods of Farmington Township.

Trees grow close to the wall of windows, and spring wildflowers are found in abundance just a short way from the home.

"We built this house about five years ago, and before that we had a more conventional yard," Betty said.

"I know I love this natural

setting and don't miss my manicured lawn, but I did miss for a while the sunlight you need to grow perennials and vegetables.

"Now my husband has purchased some office property so I can have a garden there. I know some garden writers find they like to just write, but I have to garden, too."

MRS. FRANKEL's early interest and experience in gardening grew together in the small town where she lived as a girl.

"Both my parents had been raised in New York City and knew nothing about growing things," she said. "I did get some advice from a great-aunt, but mostly any planting that was done was left to me."

mington Area Naturalists, a study group that meets in the Community Center.

She also has been a Girl Scout leader, and now that her daughters are older still spends two weeks each summer at day camp nature counselor, taking the girls on hikes and helping them build mini-zoos and "introducing them to my friends the beech trees."

Currently working on a master's degree in landscaping at U of M, she does landscaping of homes on a free-lance basis, designing each with an eye to "suitability to the owner and compatibility with the neighborhood."

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