

Gardens Teach Beauty, Botany, Ecology

Anyone passing by Bishop Timon High School these spring days knows that somebody at the McKinley Pky. school has a green thumb.

Thousands of colorful tulips frame the well-kept lawn and shrubbery.

The successful gardener is the Rev. Bernard Splawski, OFM, a man who has not only a green thumb, but a master's degree in botany.

He is a biology teacher at the school and has made gardening his hobby since joining the faculty 9 years ago.

"Working with flowers and plants has been my interest since childhood days," said Father Bernard. His parents are Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Splawski of Olean.

THAT INTEREST continued and grew during his years in the seminary. While he was studying at the Franciscan Monastery in Washington, he worked on its major tourist attraction — the Holy Land Garden.

On a National Science Foundation Grant, Father Bernard went to the University of Virginia. His project there was to restore the gardens of an 800-acre plantation in Claremont, Va.

His thesis was a botanical survey of the plantation. While doing research for it, he discovered that a similar project had once been done there by Benjamin Franklin.

FATHER BERNARD thinks that his gardening work at Bishop Timon provides an ecological lesson for the school's 990 teen-aged boys.

He's proud of their co-operation in keeping the grounds neat. Some of them help him to keep the lawn mowed and watered.



SCIENCE IS BEAUTY—The Rev. Bernard Splawski, OFM, doesn't leave flowers and greenery at Bishop Timon High School to grow by chance. The biology teacher and botany expert has motivated many students down ecological paths.

"They sure know where not to drop empty pop cans and candy wrappers when I'm around," says the 6-foot, 3-inch priest.

"The flowers themselves are fighting pollution by adding oxygen to the air," he added. Father Bernard said that the bulbs, seeds, fertilizer and other gardening supplies he uses all are donated.

AFTER THE tulip season,

he'll plant petunias and geraniums. Then there will be 400 rose bushes in bloom later in the summer, including flowers of many colors and hybrids.

The library at Bishop Timon also has benefited from Father Bernard's work over the years. His plant classifications and specimens are there.

"My dream is to have a green house for students,

where I can teach a practical botany course and I'd like a roof garden on the top floor of the school," he said.

Father Bernard enjoys being outdoors, no matter what the weather. In winter he teaches skiing and is moderator of the 400-member ski club which Bishop Timon students co-sponsor with Mt. Mercy Academy girls every Friday.