



GARDEN CURATOR'S LETTER

By Susan Wilkins



*Life will be richer
by the discovery
of beauty
that we have
hitherto passed
unheeding.*

—Eloise Butler

Ah, Spring. The delights of this ephemeral season seem nearly endless: The fresh scent of newly awakened earth, rich from winter's melt and ripe with the warming sun's fertile promise; the tips of leaves poking up through duff and dampened soil; flowers dangling off still-bare branches and emerging from tender stems; and birdsong, a few voices at first, and then, the morning choirs begin. It is the time of a return of scents and sights and sounds not smelled, or seen, or heard since last year's spring appeared and quickly blossomed into another summer. Now, this delightful season is upon us, and where better to explore its magnificent and fleeting expression in our wonderful community than at the Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden?

This season at the Garden we have much to be pleased about and many exciting projects to bring to fruition. Please take a look at some of the highlights below and stay in touch via Facebook and the Garden's website throughout the 2014 season.

- ☞ The design of the new bridge and boardwalk that will replace the wood-chipped wetland trail will be completed, with plans to begin construction on Phase 1 of the project this year. Updates will be posted on the Garden's website.
- ☞ Analysis of data collected during the 2013 Garden bee inventory by entomologist Elaine Evans will be completed and made available to the public.
- ☞ A complete census of the vascular plants in the Garden will be taken by celebrated botanist Barbara Delaney.

Data will be available at the Shelter and on the Garden's website once it's been compiled.

- ☞ The Urban Birding Festival will be held June 6-8 and will include many fun, family-focused birding programs and activities in the Garden and Theodore Wirth Park. The festival is made possible with the support of volunteers from the Minneapolis Audubon Chapter.
- ☞ Planting in prominent woodland garden areas along Trillium Trail and Violet Way Trail will continue as efforts to enhance the beauty and richness of both areas continue.
- ☞ Wonderful programs including Nature Tots and the Homeschool Program Series, as well as a range of programs for youth groups and students from public and private schools, will be led by Garden staff this season.
- ☞ New and returning teachers will offer several special classes for those who want to delve into topics such as landscape photography, watercolor painting, medicinal plants of the Garden and more.
- ☞ Honeybees will be housed for a third season at the Garden and pollinator-focused programming for the public will be offered, including Intro to Honeybees and Basics of Beekeeping led by The Beez Kneez. Bumble-Bee surveys will be guided by entomologist Elaine Evans.
- ☞ The newly refurbished gates at the Garden's south entrance are now in place. ♦



To find out more about current and future happenings at the Garden, visit:

- www.minneapolisparcs.org/ebwg
- www.facebook.com/pages/Eloise-Butler-Wildflower-Garden-and-Bird-Sanctuary/166629750054157



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A splendid spring brought enough rain and moderate temperatures to allow for woodland wildflowers to thrive from mid-April to late May. Trillium, trout lilies, bluebells and bellworts blossomed in profusion. Songbirds of many hues graced the branches of the half-bare trees. It was one of the most delightful spring unfoldings that I have seen so far here and I have watched the Wildflower Garden change and grow for a decade now. From year to year, season to season and day to day, this wild and vibrant garden changes. If one looks closely enough, not even a moment stands still. It's a remarkable process to witness, and those fortunate enough to observe it feel much gratitude.

In a wild garden like this, there are so many dynamic forces at play—some of which staff and volunteers have a hand in and many of which, although influenced by humans, are at a scale too large to directly alter in our work here. Perhaps, at best, we can intervene.

After being intimately involved for so long with the Wildflower Garden's evolution, I've grown to feel such appreciation that we as a group of dedicated staff and volunteers can do our part, every day, to nurture the health and vitality of this 15-acre sanctuary and to revel in the steady progress made.

Liz Anderson, co-chair of the Friends Invasive Plant Action Group, aptly states how this progress can be made and experienced in her report in this issue of the *Gentian*. How pleasing it is to return to a woodland acre year after year and see a trillium grow where a weed, or a sea of weeds, once stood. As Liz notes, "It involves being present with the task at hand, not being overwhelmed by the challenge and learning to really see the return of a healthier and more diverse woodland." Such clarity is shared by someone who knows the territory well.

In the face of significant challenges to our local ecosystems, pressures that are interlinked, such as climate change and increasing numbers of invasive plants, insects and other invertebrates, can feel insurmountable. Perhaps they are. Regardless, in attuning oneself to the constant changes taking place in nature and botanic gardens like the Wildflower Garden, I think that it is possible to find your place, or niche, to assist in the positive movement toward a more vital and diverse local ecology. It is through paying close attention that we can find our lead, the guidance to know what will make a difference and how to do it. And this is the gift of the Garden; it is a place for us to learn and to grow ourselves: to take root, to study, to apprentice with wild nature itself and to delight as we show up for each visit, each day to learn what it is that we can do to nurture the lands and waters that we live amongst.

May we all take inspiration from the beauty of the natural world and the wonderful work that this community of land stewards, volunteers, visitors, artists, administrators, gardeners, interns and education staff carry out daily.

If you would like to become more involved at the Wildflower Garden, many programs and events await you, as do volunteer opportunities. I invite you to celebrate the Garden by attending two wonderful summer events in August—the Friends of the Wildflower Garden Fundraiser on August 3 and the Florilegium opening at the Minneapolis Central Library on August 14. You'll find details about both events in this newsletter. Visit the Wildflower Garden's website at www.minneapolisparcs.org/ebwg for more information about these opportunities and more. ■

DON'T MISS THE ELOISE BUTLER WILDFLOWER FLORILEGIUM EXHIBIT

Please join us for the opening reception of the Eloise Butler Wildflower Florilegium Exhibit on Thursday, August 14 from 6:30 to 8 p.m. Nearly 50 botanical paintings of native plants found in the Garden will be on display through October 15 in the Cargill Hall Gallery at Hennepin County's Minneapolis Central Library located in downtown Minneapolis at 300 Nicollet Mall.

Both the reception, which includes refreshments and talks by artists, and the exhibit are free and open to the public. The Florilegium, which documents the plants of America's first public wildflower garden, is an ongoing project by students of the Minnesota School of Botanical Art. ■

Leadplant illustration by Barbara Illingsworth





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Autumn is here, and Eloise Butler described so wonderfully the richness of the Wildflower Garden at this time of year. With the great diversity of tree species, shrubs, vines, wildflowers, grasses, sedges, ferns, mosses and fungi, the end of the season can be as colorful, if not more so, than the most exuberant summer day. Autumn is also a great time to celebrate all that has been realized and enjoyed in the months of birth and growth within the Garden. And there are many, many wonderful moments, events and goings-on to be grateful for this season.

The Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden Florilegium opened on August 14 at the Minneapolis Central Library. Forty-five botanical illustrations were on display and the event was attended by hundreds of visitors, including many members of the Friends of the Wild Flower Garden. Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) Superintendent Jayne Miller spoke at the event, sharing her appreciation for the project, the efforts of the artists from the Minnesota School of Botanical Art and the Wildflower Garden. Two lectures were also offered, and both were very well attended and well received. Thank you to the Friends for your support of this project, and for sharing the costs of the delicious refreshments provided at the opening in partnership with the library.

On September 6, an inspired and enjoyable new event took place when more than 50 visitors participated in the first Community Spoon Carving at the Wildflower Garden. This fun and creative project was made possible through a connection made by Mark Knierim and Friends Board Member Jim Proctor. The event was led by the University of Minnesota Carving Club and Summit View Spoon Carvers, and the spoons were carved out of buckthorn harvested from Theodore Wirth Park. People really enjoyed themselves, learned a lot about spoon carving and helped with woodland restoration efforts in the process. Thanks to Mark Knierim; the spoon carving leads; Jim Proctor and the Youth Outdoors crew from the Conservation Corp of Minnesota; Marcia Holmberg, Natural Resources Coordinator for the MPRB; Wildflower Garden staff; and all of the participants, for making this a successful event.

Speaking of buckthorn, Friends Invasives Plant Action Group (FIPAG) co-chairs Jim Proctor and Elizabeth Anderson continue to do an amazing job of leading volunteers in restoration efforts in the Preservation Zone surrounding the Wildflower Garden. As a result of their steadfast leadership and the wonderful efforts of Jim, Liz and the other FIPAG volunteers, the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board Assistant Superintendent of Environmental Stewardship, Justin Long, approved a request to expand the Preservation Zone into a beautiful maple forest immediately south of the Garden's main entrance. This new area will

keep FIPAG volunteers happily weeding for years to come, and the results will be appreciated by so many. The woodland areas of the Preservation Zone continue to grow more healthy and vibrant each year, thanks to the efforts of FIPAG and the Legacy Volunteers who work to keep areas where FIPAG volunteers have pulled invasive plants weed-free long into the future.

Also, I would like to thank Lauren Borer and the Wildflower Garden staff naturalists, who continue to provide high-quality, engaging environmental education opportunities for a wide variety

of learners. In addition to the numerous free, public tours offered several times a week at the Wildflower Garden, Lauren and the naturalists have led more than 100 paid programs for youth and adults, serving nearly 2,000 people throughout the 2014 season. Their tremendous work, inspiring and educating the community about the wonders of the natural world, have untold benefits. We are so fortunate to have such a skilled and passionate group of educators on staff at the Wildflower Garden.

And please let me also thank Lauren Husting for her great work this season. Lauren is a longtime Shelter volunteer who, this year, took over for Melissa Hansen as the Garden's volunteer coordinator. Lauren's enthusiasm for the Garden is infectious, and she's already signed on several new people who want to help out in different areas.

Finally, thanks to the Friends of the Wild Flower Garden board and membership. Your organization provides essential support for the Wildflower Garden's health and vitality in innumerable ways. Your 62-year friendship with the Wildflower Garden is of incalculable value and deeply appreciated. So, thank you for another great season, everyone. See you in the spring!

In autumn, the scene is of surpassing loveliness with the beautiful groups of tress on the hills, in the valleys, and about the ponds, the vivid reds of the maples and the oaks, and the gold of the poplars set off by the white boles of the birch and the dark green foliage of the tamaracks.

– Eloise Butler