

THE FRINGED GENTIAN™

A PUBLICATION OF FRIENDS OF THE WILD FLOWER GARDEN, INC.



Dear Friends,

Our long, cool spring with those intermittent hot spells was wonderful for the Garden. The much-needed rain was a gift after a rather dry winter and most plant communities looked lush and healthy at the end of May. The Saturday morning birders have reported having very good rambles so far this season; warblers, raptors and shorebirds have all been seen and heard, along with our familiar feeder friends. And, to add luster to this lovely picture, we are on track to accomplish the installation of the new boardwalk in July. The funding, design and fulfillment of the northern portion (the bridge segments) represent our Cary George Wetland Project, a tribute to the Garden's fourth caretaker. Like Eloise Butler, he was particularly protective of the Garden's wetland. We anticipate a commemorative event to honor Cary and introduce the new walkway in September. Please keep in touch through our website www.friendsofthewildflowergarden.org for updates on the installation and the celebration.

The Friends' Board has been busy preparing for the June fundraiser, which we hope will help raise general funds for our projects while attracting some new members. As we lose the older generation of Friends, we need to draw in and welcome interested people of all ages. We heartily encourage you to share your appreciation of the Garden, and your issues of the Gentian, with friends and family—and please bring others with you when you visit! Of course, in strengthening our organization, our ultimate goal is always to support the Garden and deepen the public's appreciation for native plants and birds and their preservation.

We are also confronting another challenge. We need more Shelter docents. The Martha Crone Shelter Volunteer Program is crucial to the successful functioning of the Garden. Most days,



Photo: Phoebe Waugh

the Garden staff is very busy preparing educational materials and displays and leading programs, walks and classes. The care of the Shelter environment and its visitors has always been the purview of our wonderful volunteers, who also tend to some outdoor tasks.

Our Shelter volunteer coordinator, Lauren Husting, co-leads a group training every spring with Garden staff, and throughout the season there are special walks and tours for volunteers. You need not be any kind of expert to do a terrific job, and you can pair up with a seasoned docent for a shift or two as a kind of intern experience, if you like. If you're interested, please see Lauren's Shelter update in this newsletter and contact her for more information. It is truly a joy to spend time helping in the Shelter and on the trails.

Just a few days ago, I turned up a ragged copy of *In Wildness Is the Preservation of the World*, the fine compilation of Eliot Porter photos and Thoreau quotes. In closing, allow me to share an excerpt from *Walden*:

We need the tonic of wildness—to wade sometimes in marshes where the bittern and the meadow-hen lurk, and hear the booming of the snipe; to smell the whispering sedge where only some wilder and more solitary fowl builds her nest, and the mink crawls with its belly close to the ground. At the same time that we are earnest to explore and learn all things, we require that all things be mysterious and unexplorable, that land and sea be infinitely wild, unsurveyed and unfathomed by us because unfathomable. We can never have enough of nature. We must be refreshed by the sight of inexhaustible vigor, vast and titanic features, the sea-coast with its wrecks, the wilderness with its living and its decaying trees, the thunder-cloud, and the rain which lasts three weeks and produces freshets. We need to witness our own limits transgressed, and some life pasturing freely where we never wander.

May your summer months include the perfect dose of nature.

Sincerely,

J Pam Weiner

Meet the Garden's New Education Coordinator

AFTER A COAST-TO-COAST CAREER WITH THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, HOLLY FETZER RETURNS TO HER MIDWEST ROOTS.

By Donna Ahrens, *Gentian Copyeditor*

Q: Where did you grow up? How did you get interested in nature?

I grew up in the Midwest—mostly in Brookings, South Dakota. As a child, my family frequently participated in outdoor activities (hiking, camping, biking, etc.), and my parents placed a high emphasis on getting outdoors and enjoying fresh air. So a sense of “natural world therapy” was instilled in me at a young age and has become a lifelong love for me, both in my personal life and as a career.

Q: What's your education background?

I have a bachelor's degree from Minnesota State University at Mankato, where I did a double major in English and Parks & Recreation (Natural Resource Management emphasis), and a master's degree in Parks & Recreation Management from South Dakota State University.



Q: Tell us about the career path that led you to Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden.

An internship as an undergrad led me to my first job with the National Park Service (NPS). I worked as an interpretation park ranger at Mount Rushmore National Memorial, in South Dakota, giving tours and studio talks. Then I worked for the NPS at Hyde Park, New York (the birthplace of Franklin Roosevelt); at Grand Teton National Park in Wyoming; and at Yosemite National Park in California. The grandeur of Grand Teton and Yosemite is incredible, and some of the best moments of my life were spent in the backcountry, miles from any road, basking in the glory of the natural world. However, I missed the Midwest and my roots, and I'm excited that my career path has led me here. I'm looking forward to learning and teaching in this wondrous Garden.

Q: What kinds of education programs is the Garden offering this year?

We have so many exciting programs! We continue to offer a wide range of free public programs on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and all weekend long. We also have quite a repertoire of fee-based public programs, such as Medicinal Plant Uses, Outdoor Yoga, Full Moon Walks, and Nature Tots Preschool Program. We offer private garden tours to groups that range from garden clubs to scouts troops to summer school students. They're a great way to get a personalized tour and an up-close look at the Garden.

Q: What has surprised you so far about working at the Garden?

It is amazing to me that we are in an urban park setting, so close to a major highway, yet when I enter the Garden I immediately feel a sense of wonder and can sense that this is a special place. I love coming to work every day, seeing something new pop up and hearing the chirping birds. I am enthralled by the presence of Eloise herself and the foresight she had in preserving this remarkable place.

Q: Any additional thoughts you'd like to pass along to our readers?

I enjoy the camaraderie of the Park Board, Friends and volunteers. The long history of the partnerships and the people behind these organizations really make this place what it is, and I am honored and overjoyed to be a small part of it. Looking forward to meeting everybody and working with you at the Garden!

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Garden Curator's Letter

By Susan Wilkins



As we settle into summer this year at the Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden and Bird Sanctuary, the spring rains and mild temperatures have set the stage for a growing season characterized by luxuriant growth, abundant blossoms and a wonderful freshness that permeates everything. With these pleasant conditions arrive delighted visitors from far and near. I personally have never seen the Wildflower Garden so verdant and so full of joyful nature enthusiasts of all ages.

The Wildflower Garden is such a unique garden, not only within the Minneapolis Park System, but throughout the country and the world. Very few public gardens are dedicated to the preservation and exhibition of native plants in an unassumingly charming and decidedly bucolic naturalistic setting, right in the heart of a major metropolitan area. There is nothing contrived about the Wildflower Garden; its wonderful wildness has been encouraged and continues to be cultivated with the utmost care.

The Garden's essential dignity has been nurtured with reverent attention for over 108 years, and this quality is palpable to those who visit. In late June, I had the great fortune to attend the American Public Gardens Association conference where I was able to share highlights of the Garden's history, plant collections, education and volunteer programs and more with national and international botanic garden managers, curators, horticulturalists and botanists. Sentiments about the Wildflower Garden's significance as a historic, native plant botanic garden were reflected back wholeheartedly by leaders in the global public garden management field. The Wildflower Garden is absolutely one of a kind—a jewel of historical, ecological and horticultural value beyond appraisal.

As Eloise Butler noted in July of 1911, the year that she became curator of her beloved Wildflower Garden, there are many kinds of gardens. And I couldn't agree more that the most interesting among them are those that reflect the flavor and personality of the creative force behind them. When that creative force understands and has the ability to bring out and add dimension to the spirit of the place, the *genus loci*, there is potential for something to emerge that is utterly richer and has infinitely greater depth than the sum of its myriad parts. Timeless and essential, the Wildflower Garden is such a place. In our ever-changing world and landscapes, we are fortunate to have such an enduring model for

how wild gardens, full of diversity, novelty and surprise, can grow. And grow they must.

The Wildflower Garden is an opportune place in our community to connect with the richness of the natural world that we are a part of. With 108-year-old plant collections, a marvelous history, wonderful staff and volunteers ready to share their knowledge about the Garden's flora and fauna, and a fantastic setting for exploration and rejuvenation, it's a special resource where we can learn how to give our attention to nature and receive the benefits of that caring, in the most delightful of ways, nurturing our own well-being and our love of life, our biophilia, with each stroll down the trail.

As we go about our summers and enjoy the bounty of this beautiful growing season, let's keep our senses tuned to the subtle rhythms, sights and sounds and the timeless beauty of our special nature spaces and gardens. Enjoy!

"There are many kinds of gardens. Those are most interesting that have an individual flavor and express, as pleasure grounds should, within the bounds of good taste, the owner's personality."

—Eloise Butler



Culver's root

Photo: Gary Bebeau

The Trees of Eloise Butler

By Wesley Nugteren, Garden Naturalist

I've always been fascinated by trees. I grew up on the rolling plains of South Dakota, where trees were planted as shelterbelts, protecting fields and farmhouses from the erosive gusts of fierce prairie winds. Rows of Tartarian honeysuckle, red cedar, green ash, silver maple and box elder extended through the fields farther than I was allowed to wander.

My brother and I built countless forts in our little stretch of trees and let our imaginations run wild. But it wasn't until my early teens, while vacationing in Wisconsin, that I realized the true meaning of a forest. I was awestruck and in love. I knew that I would live in the woods someday, but I never imagined that I'd get to work in Minneapolis' "hidden gem," Eloise Butler's wild garden. I feel a kindred connection to Eloise and her reverence for majestic trees. The Wildflower Garden that now bears her name is a living testament to her vision of sanctuary for these remnant residents of Minnesota's Big Woods.

A white oak that Eloise named Monarch was the most prominent tree in the early "Wild Botanic Garden." Eloise wrote of her attempts to prolong Monarch's life in 1926. (She refers to the tree as "he" because she considered its spirit to be male.)

*To begin with the trees, the most conspicuous is a majestic white oak, 700 years young, the largest and oldest in the vicinity of Minneapolis. Monarch, as we call him, was slowly dying atop. So in obedience to the scriptural injunction, his dead limbs were cut off and cast away, and decayed portions of his "heart"—not essential as with humans for circulation—were taken out and replaced with concrete. Thus, lopped and reinforced, he bade fair for many more years to hold sway. (Excerpted from *The Wild Gardener*, by Martha Hellander.)*



Not only was Monarch a champion tree, he also fruited a champion mushroom from his base. In 1919, Eloise Butler submitted the 35-pound hen-of-the-woods (*Grifola frondosa*) mushroom to the Minnesota State Fair. It was said to be the largest mushroom ever grown in Minnesota. Because hen-of-the-woods often grows on dead and dying oak trees, its appearance should have been a sign that Monarch's glory days were past. But, resilient to the end, the tree went on to survive the loss of his top and many of his limbs during a 1925 tornado.

Even Monarch couldn't live forever: He died in 1940 and was cut down. Because his heartwood was hollowed and decayed, it was impossible to tell the venerable tree's true age by counting the rings. Despite his legendary status, Monarch is now thought to be younger than Eloise believed. Given the tree's recorded circumference of 8 ½ feet, Monarch is estimated to have been about 200 years old when he died.

In addition to Monarch, Eloise wrote fondly of other trees in the Garden and she had names for some of them, too. Of two large American elms she wrote: "In the foreground is a shapely elm, the 'Inner Guard.' Beyond, across a sun-kissed open space, rises 'Lone Sentinel,' first seen from the other side of the swamp. All that is needed to make the picture an almost perfect Corot is the presence of a few dancing maidens, wood nymphs they would have to be to fit the fair seclusion of the scene." She goes on to describe

Lone Sentinel as “flat-topped like the stone pines of Italy.” She also mentions a seven-boled yellow birch that she named Seven Sisters.

While these trees no longer stand among their descendants in the Garden, many large and significant trees do. The Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board’s Heritage Tree Program recognizes trees based on champion size, significant size, and historical or cultural significance. Ten such trees are currently standing at the Wildflower Garden. Among them is a white oak with a circumference larger than Monarch’s. It can be seen towering over the marsh at station 21 along Geranium Path. Other Heritage Tree species in the garden include Eastern hemlock, black cherry, yellow birch, big-tooth aspen, wild plum, witch hazel, striped maple, and mountain maple. Who knows which ones are poised to become the champions of tomorrow?

With all this talk of champions and giant trees, let’s also remember the smaller trees that garner our attention. Among them, and possibly my favorite, is a medium-sized ironwood I call the Pull-Up Tree. Growing along the trail between station 24 and the back gate, its lower branch crosses overhead at a comfortable pull-up height. It’s even managed to grow what look like handles, signifying its intention. While school kids are asked not to go off trail, not to pick flowers, and not to run through the garden, it’s nice to pass the Pull-Up Tree which offers a “yes” to their pleas to touch it.

Next time you visit the Garden, take some time to notice the trees, both big and small. Marvel at their beauty, appreciate the ecological bounty they provide and if you feel so inclined, call them by name.



Photo: John Toren

Eloise Butler Boardwalk Project Update

By Andrea Weber, Project Manager, MPRB Planning

In July, the three small wooden bridges on Lady Slipper Lane and the channel to Mallard Pool will be replaced with a custom boardwalk, designed to better protect the wetland, keep visitors’ feet dry, and offer places to sit, observe and enjoy the Garden. Sitting about a foot above the current trail surface, the boardwalk will be 4 feet wide, and the route will consist of gently curving segments that will be nice for strolling. On the channel crossing to Mallard Pond, a series of wood-topped camera posts will act as a subtle railing, and there will also be an integrated bench.

One special thing to note about the new boardwalk is that all of the wood is ash, harvested throughout the park system as part of our ash removal plan. Rough-milled in Minneapolis, the wood was shipped to a Duluth company where it was kiln dried for a month and then thermally modified to harden it. The result is an extremely hard, weather- and rot-resistant product. We hope this wood will lend a natural and gracefully aging quality to the boardwalk to complement the Garden.

The boardwalk is currently being fabricated in Madison, Wisconsin, and installation is expected in mid-July. A professional trail contractor will lead the installation, which should take less than two weeks,

and the Conservation Corps will provide the labor. Funds are still being raised for future phases, which include widening the gathering space for small groups near the center of the wetland (close to station 27) and extending the boardwalk all the way through the wetland (between stations 29 and 30).

The Mallard Pool Crossing will be dedicated in honor of Cary George, the Garden’s fourth caretaker. Funding from the Friends of the Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden has helped support the design and a large part of the construction of the boardwalk, which was created in consultation with an advisory committee consisting of members of the Friends, neighbors and MPRB staff.

Cunningham Group put in many hours consulting on the project to get the design just right, and we hope garden visitors will see the new boardwalk as a thoughtful and elegant addition to the garden. We’re looking forward to a dedication in late summer of this year!

Please check the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden website for updates. Or contact Susan Wilkins, Garden Curator (swilkins@minneapolisparcs.org; (612) 499-9242) or Andrea Weber, Project Manager (aweber@minneapolisparcs.org; (612) 230-6466)

Friends Invasive Plant Action Group

This column is about effort and the results of effort. Since the Friends Invasive Plant Action Group (FIPAG) effort began, the number of FIPAG volunteers has grown and the effort expanded. A year ago, this observation appeared in the Gentian's FIPAG column: "Passersby who see us working will sometimes comment that the job seems impossible, but it's not. Our work is urgent, but also slow, steady and companion-able." This spring, the results of this slow, steady effort are unmistakable. FIPAG volunteers are having to look harder and harder to find remaining garlic mustard stragglers. We'll soon finish the last of the buckthorn work in the Preservation Zone, and by fall we'll be concentrating on our newest area, the maple glen east of the Garden.

The results are directly observable, even from inside the Garden. To see for yourself, enter the front gate of the Garden and take the first path to the right, which leads to the prairie. As you walk, wherever the path splits, keep to the right, down along the edge of the prairie, into the fern glen and to the back gate. At a number of places along this walk, the Garden fence is very close to the path. Before FIPAG started work, the Garden, and your view, was continually obstructed by the buckthorn outside the fence. Now, you can see aspen, ferns and wildflowers flourishing on both sides of the fence. The Garden flows outward and seems bigger.

All of this effort by FIPAG means that more Legacy volunteers are needed. That's because invasives work at the Garden is a two-step process. First, FIPAG volunteers tackle an area as a group, usually for several years. Next, the Garden's Legacy program steps in. Individuals who volunteer for the program are assigned to a particular area in the Preservation Zone, and under the direction of Garden Curator Susan Wilkins, continue the restoration work that's been done, removing invasives of lesser concern such as burdock and honeysuckle.

It's a rare volunteer opportunity to deepen your outdoor experience on your own time and schedule, in the quiet of a woodland. Under the direction of a professional horticulturalist, Legacy volunteers



A few of the many Legacy volunteers: (left to right) Kendra, Connie and Marty Bergstedt. Photo: Phoebe Waugh.

maintain an area that's part of one of the most beautiful woodlands you'll find anywhere. In addition to individuals, small groups, families, work colleagues or friends can maintain these areas.

The work of the Legacy volunteers is critical. Without them, the restored areas would all too quickly revert to their former state. If you're interested in becoming a Legacy volunteer, please contact Susan Wilkins (swilkins@minneapolisparcs.org, office: (612) 370-4863; cell: (612) 499-9242). If you like, you can be involved with both the Legacy program and FIPAG.

— Jim Proctor & Liz Anderson,
Invasive Plant Action Group co-chairs
invasives@friendsofeloisebutler.org



Photo: Gary Bobeau

Shelter Volunteer Update

Greetings from the Martha Crone Shelter! It's my second year as Volunteer Coordinator for the Shelter docent crew, and now that I know the ropes, I'm really excited for this year's possibilities. We are always in need of new faces to help us serve visitors to the Shelter. Docents greet guests, helping them navigate the Garden and identify things they've seen. There's no need to be an expert naturalist! We have lots of tools to help you help our visitors, and in the process get to better know the Garden yourself. If you are interested in volunteering at the Shelter, please contact me at ebwgs sheltervolunteers@gmail.com.

—Lauren Husting, Shelter Volunteer Coordinator

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Memorials and gifts to the Friends are much appreciated and constitute an important part of keeping the Garden a special place for generations of people to enjoy. In 2015, undesignated gifts are being used for the Cary George Wetland Project. Project update information is on the Friends website.

Note: Memorials and gifts are tax deductible. When sending a memorial, please give the name and address of the family being honored so that we can acknowledge that a memorial has been received. An acknowledgment will be provided to all donors. Memorials and gifts should be sent to: Treasurer, Friends of the Wild Flower Garden, P. O. Box 3793, Minneapolis, MN 55403. Checks are payable to Friends of the Wild Flower Garden or donate on our website: www.friendsofthewildflowergarden.org



Butterfly weed. *photo: Gary Bebeau*

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The Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden and Bird Sanctuary is comprised of cultivated but naturalistic woodland, wetland and prairie environments, 2/3 mile of mulch-covered pathways and a rustic shelter where educational programming and materials can be found. It is the oldest public wildflower garden in the United States. The 15-acre site is located within the city of Minneapolis and is owned and operated by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. The Garden is open from April 1 through October 15 from 7:30 A.M. to a half-hour before sunset.



Photo: John Toren

The yellow irises are not a Minnesota native, but were planted by Eloise Butler and continue to thrive in the Garden.

The Friends of the Wild Flower Garden, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) Minnesota nonprofit corporation, formed in 1952. Its purpose is to educate by enhancing Garden visitors' appreciation and understanding of Minnesota's native plants and natural environments and to offer assistance for the Garden in the form of funding and other support.

The Fringed Gentian is published for members and supporters of the Friends.

For changes to your mailing address, please write Membership Coordinator Jayne Funk at: members@friendsofeloisebutler.org or Membership, Friends of the Wild Flower Garden, P.O. Box 3793, Mpls., MN 55403.

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