

THE FRINGED GENTIAN™

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

Dear Friends,

As I write on the first day of October, daytime temps are still in the high 60s and there is very little autumn color so far. The Garden is glowing green, and the warmth and our generous rainfall have created an extraordinary scene in the prairie, with very tall and robust plants towering overhead. The purple asters are huge and showing no signs of fall fading yet. Curator Susan Wilkins agrees that we are seeing something extraordinary, and she is tracking the plant communities carefully as we attempt to understand how the Garden will be affected by climate change.

One change we want to avoid is having parts of the Garden become a monoculture, where certain plants take over because conditions are favorable to them, threatening healthy species and limiting diversity. So the Friends have helped to fund some corrective measures to reduce invasives and aggressive woody plants in the wetland and prairie. In the near future, the Garden may lose some species and support others as conditions shift. Perhaps we will have some “new natives.” It is a challenging time for the Garden and the Curator, with many unknowns. I believe the Friends must be ready to support whatever programs and techniques are deemed appropriate and protective as we confront this complicated new era in the life of our unique and treasured Garden.

On a happier note, I want to share some very rewarding news regarding the wetland boardwalk. This year, the Minnesota chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) gave the boardwalk its People’s Choice Award. Additionally, the project was a finalist for a 2016 Design Award at the national ASLA event (one of 30 finalists out of 456 entries). That jury commended the restraint and simplicity shown in the boardwalk design, especially in reference to its natural context. They also remarked on the use of wood milled from local ash trees, as well as the sensitivity of the preparation and installation given the vulnerable wetland habitat.

The Cuningham Firm, led by James Robin and David Motzenbecker, is to be congratulated for its excellent work reflected in these professional kudos. We should also commend Minneapolis Park

and Recreation Board staff, especially Susan Wilkins and Andrea Weber, past lead on planning, along with the community and Friends’ Board participants who served on the technical advisory committee. We can be confident in the success of Phase I, on both utilitarian and aesthetic grounds.

So, now, it’s time to get moving on the next phase of the boardwalk project. As you know if you’ve visited the wetland this season, there remains a significant area yet to boardwalk in the low-lying portion of the Garden. Fundraising plans are taking shape, and I ask that you consult our website (www.friendsofthewildflowergarden.org) over the winter for news of a special Mother’s Day event, as well as other updates. In 2017, the Garden will have a 110-year birthday and the Friends will reach 65 years of service, so those anniversaries will play a role in our efforts. I welcome your thoughts and suggestions about fundraising, too. Please contact me at drijpw@earthlink.net or 612-377-3572.

As another season comes to a close, allow me to thank all of our devoted volunteers, including those serving as docents in the Martha Crone Shelter, the wily weed warriors of our FIPAG teams, and the Legacy Stewards. Later in these pages, you’ll find photos from our Annual Volunteer Appreciation Event, where we honor the generous folks who do so much for the Garden.

I also want to welcome our new volunteer coordinator, Jennifer Dunne, who has been on the job for only six weeks and is already showing great mastery. Past volunteer coordinator Lauren Husting is still with us as a volunteer as she moves on to her doctoral studies at the University of Minnesota School of Music. Thank you, Lauren! Here’s another example of the truism that “it takes a village,” and here’s to all of you who help sustain the Garden with your memberships, donations and volunteering.

Sincerely,



photo: Melissa Hansen





What's Inside the Fence

Legacy Volunteer Jim Coleman

By Donna Ahrens

When asked when he first visited Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden, Jim Coleman smiles. Sitting at a south Minneapolis coffee shop on a rainy September morning, he recalls going to the Garden with his parents about six decades ago. “It was fall, probably October, and when we got to the Garden, the gate was locked. So we hiked around the fenced perimeter, in Wirth Park. But I was intrigued about what was inside that fence.”

Over the years, Jim made it his business to find out, as his interest in nature led him to pay periodic visits to the Garden. Though he hadn't grown up surrounded by wildflowers—“our yard was grass, no flowers,” he says wryly—he was always interested in the natural world. At his parents' cabin in northern Minnesota, he says, “I was fascinated to notice how the trees and flowers changed over time. As the days and weeks passed, I would watch and think, “Aha, so *that's* what happens to this plant!”

Jim has explored many of the nature preserves and parks in the Twin Cities, and his interests eventually coalesced in the Master Naturalist Program offered by University of Minnesota Extension. Through classroom learning, books and hands-on field trips, the program trains nature lovers of all ages for the work of volunteering in the outdoors.

In 2009, while enrolled in the program, Jim heard there was an opening for a Legacy Program volunteer at Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden. He jumped at the opportunity. “I had volunteered with the Friends' invasive plants group earlier that year, pulling buckthorn,” he says, “and having a plot of my own seemed like a good next step.”

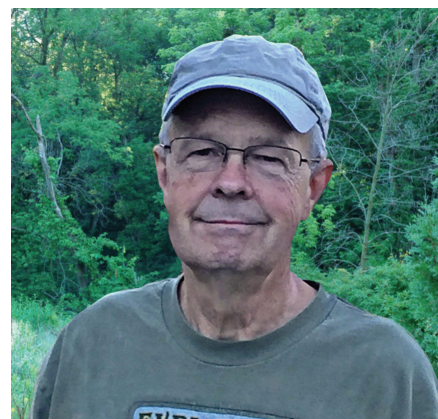
It was indeed. Since becoming a Legacy Program volunteer, Jim has tended to several plots in the Garden. Each Legacy volunteer is responsible for a small, designated section of the Wildflower

Garden and commits to removing all of the invasive species in that section for the season. Garden Curator Susan Wilkins trains the volunteers and oversees the project.

“I like the idea of having a particular area where I can see the changes throughout the year,” Jim says. I especially like the early spring, with the light filtering through the trees, and it's easy to spot the birds. This year, a pileated woodpecker and a great horned owl like to hang out nearby. And they seem pretty comfortable, even with me there—probably because I'm not bothering them, but just digging and working in my plots.

“It's very rewarding work. I've reduced a lot of garlic mustard over the years, and it gets easier and easier to do. But the buckthorn always comes back,” he adds with a laugh.

Jim is a proponent of any and all kinds of volunteer work involving nature. Now that he's retired, he also cares for a plot of land at Lone Lake Park in Minnetonka and does some periodic volunteer work at the Minnesota Valley National Refuge. In addition, he and his wife Jan, an artist, are currently co-chairs of the tours committee of the Twin Cities chapter of Wild Ones, a nonprofit educational organization of native plant enthusiasts.



Reflecting on his long-time fascination with the natural world, Jim remarks, “It seems that we're losing so much of the natural environment and wildlife is being squeezed out. At the Wildflower Garden, there are so many different programs and ways to be involved in nature, from birding and enjoying wildflowers to taking classes and nature walks, to caring for the land.”

The Friends and Garden staff are thankful that Jim took the initiative to solve the mystery of “what was inside that fence” so many years ago.

— Donna Ahrens is copyeditor of the Fringed Gentian

OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

PRESIDENT
J Pamela Weiner

VICE PRESIDENT
Melissa Hansen

**TREASURER &
MEMORIALS CHAIR;
WEBSITE COORDINATOR**
Gary Bebeau

SECRETARY
Candy Bartol

MEMBERSHIP COORDINATOR
Jayne Funk

VOLUNTEERS CHAIR
Jennifer Dunne

MONEY MANAGEMENT
Steve Benson

HISTORIAN
Phoebe Waugh

INVASIVE PLANT CHAIRS
Jim Proctor
Liz Anderson

**GARDEN CURATOR,
EX OFFICIO**
Susan Wilkins

THE FRINGED GENTIAN
Meleah Maynard, *editor*
Donna Ahrens, *copyeditor*
John Toren, *designer*

Colin Bartol
Kathy Connelly
Betsy McNeerney
Lauren Husting
Gloria Miller
Jennifer Olson
Sally Pundt
Steve Pundt
Barry Schade
Anthony Waldera



Garden Curator's Letter



Garden Curator Susan Wilkins' letter will return in the next issue.



The Volunteer Appreciation Event on Nov. 6 was a delightful way to close out the Garden's 2016 season. Among the attendees were Garden Curator Susan Wilkins and her son Oliver, born last May. And thanks to FIPAG volunteer Paul Fusco for setting up a telescope to view the beautiful moon.



Celebrating Oaks - Acorn Bread

By John Toren

Late fall is a fine time to admire the gnarly and statuesque oaks that rise up from a forest floor covered with new-fallen leaves. Not long ago I decided to take my appreciation of these handsome trees a step further and make a few loaves of acorn bread.

The idea didn't appear out of the blue. I've made acorn bread before, though it was a long time ago. I was in high school. In those days Euell Gibbons, author of *Stalking the Wild Asparagus* and other books about gathering food in the wild, was what we would now call a "cultural icon." At the time no one associated foraging with gourmet restaurants. The emphasis was on *survival* or, less melodramatically (if one happened to be a suburban teenager), on establishing fundamental connections with the earth and other living things.

After all, I reasoned, the Indians of California lived on a diet of acorns for centuries, harvesting, drying, leaching, and finally grinding them into meal with stone tools. The least I could do was cook up a few, following Gibbons' homey recipe. This early experiment was only a partial success, due, I suspect, to the mediocrity of the hand-cranked cast iron coffee grinder I'd used to make the acorn meal. Yet the loaves I eventually pulled out of the oven were edible, and the odd acorn taste had a character all its own. Recently, I became curious—don't ask me why—to see if a better loaf could be produced with an electric coffee grinder or some other modern device.

Finding decent acorns proved to be more difficult than I'd imagined. The acorns under the oaks at the Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden were mostly wet, half-rotten, and often sprouting, as if they'd been lying there since last year. (Oaks often produce a good "crop" of acorns only one year out of three.) But on a biking trip with friends to Little Falls in September, we came upon a wonderful cache of fresh, clean nuts. We gathered four or five cups of them in a few minutes. Then the real work began.

To make acorn bread you first need to shell the acorns one by one with a nutcracker. This takes quite a while. Once we'd freed the nuts, we boiled them for two hours to remove the tannins, changing the water every ten minutes without losing the boil, which wasn't easy either. (Since then I've come across recipes using *cold* water. I guess this isn't an exact science.) Next, we baked the nuts for a while to dry them out again. Then we ground them into meal using a food processor, which worked quite well. Finally, we mixed the acorn meal with regular flour and baked some bread. (We also made some muffins.)

Hot from the oven and slathered with butter, the bread tasted a lot like the loaf I made forty years ago. It was sort of "nutty." Perhaps the best word to describe the taste would be "interesting." Or "different." Like an oak. I wouldn't say that it tasted bad. Really not that bad at all.

We served the muffins to guests on several occasions with butter and honey on the side. At one social gathering my brother-in-law brought along a colleague from France, and we thought we'd share this all-American treat with him. "A little dry," was his polite but slightly mordant response. "Could use some jam or sauce."

Each time we served our acorn bread, I told the story of how we'd gathered the nuts and prepared the meal, step by step. Each time, the response was the same: "Why would you go through all that work?"

And each time my response was the same: "It was fun. And I wanted to get to know the oaks."

—John Toren is the graphic designer of the Fringed Gentian



From top: cracked shells and shelled acorns; acorns boiling to remove tannins; acorns after being dried in the oven.

From top: ground acorns; muffins hot from the oven; a loaf of acorn bread.

Editor's note: All sorts of information is available online about preparing and consuming acorns. For example, different species of oak produce acorns with varying levels of tannins and sweetness. (White oak acorns are evidently sweeter than red oak acorns.) Making acorn flour, like tapping maple syrup or gathering mushrooms, could become a lifelong interest, but be sure to do some careful research before taking the plunge.

Friends Invasive Plant Action Group

This fall, the Friends Invasive Plant Action Group (FIPAG) had a stellar season clearing buckthorn just to the southeast of the Garden's main parking lot. A huge pile of uprooted buckthorn plants is a testament to the work of many volunteers over three weekends. So is the new openness in views towards the rich gold colors of the nearby maple glen this autumn. Just today, after our last buckthorn event, there were visitors pointing their cameras in that direction, and it took all my strength not to walk up to them and announce that the view they were now enjoying had been a solid wall of buckthorn just a few weeks earlier!

As mentioned in previous columns, we are working our way down into the valley and up and around its edges in an effort to encircle and protect a small remnant of Big Woods landscape. It's a very ambitious and daunting goal. At this point, I estimate it will take at least five more years to make an initial pass of the entire area. At times I get a bit overwhelmed by the scale of what we are trying to do, but all I have to do is look at the areas we started in almost a decade ago to remind myself of what is possible. In those areas I see a rich diversity of shrubs and young trees filling in the gaps left by buckthorn, and a more varied ground layer of wildflowers. I see a protective zone surrounding our beloved Wildflower Garden, one that will send a rain of native seeds into its midst rather than a deluge of seeds of just a few invasive species. Now we are attempting the same strategy for another beautiful natural community close by.

I see this ongoing work as akin to maintaining a prairie by using fire. If we want rich, diverse prairies to exist into the future, we must burn them periodically. Otherwise, they will become woodlands. In the same way, if we want rich, diverse woodlands to exist into the future, we must weed them of invasive species. In both environments, conditions have changed in ways that prevent them from continuing on their own. We know we can't do everything, but with lots of volunteer help we can restore and maintain some of these vital natural areas.

One such volunteer I'd like to introduce is Kari Christianson. Kari has stepped up to become a co-leader of our group. She has been a master naturalist volunteer since 2010 and is an avid gardener, biker and hiker. In her own words: "After volunteering for several years outside of the city limits, I was looking for an opportunity to serve closer to home. Helping to preserve the natural beauty and diversity of Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden was the answer. I enjoy beating back the invasive garlic mustard and buckthorn and watching the freed areas sprout a variety of native flowers, shrubs, and trees." We welcome Kari as an enthusiastic leader!

—Jim Proctor & Liz Anderson
Invasive Plant Action Group co-chairs



Memorials and Donations ~ june 2016 / september 2016

GIFTS RECEIVED *In support of our programs from:*

Anonymous
American Association of University Women
Toni Beitz
Billie Cashman
Arlene Fried
Edith Miller
Tom and Pat Scott
Margarete Suhr
Debra and Mike Venker
Pam Weiner and Jim Wittenberg

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 2016, undesignated gifts will be used for Garden restoration projects and phase II of the wetland boardwalk. 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

MEMORIALS RECEIVED

For Dean Brittain from Melissa Hansen
For Joyce Momont from Philip Momont
For Jane from Barbara Levie
For Anonymous from Lynette Wallin
In honor of the wedding of Nathan Campeau and
Kari Putterman Campeau from John Hanson

— New Members —

Emily Brisse, Deephaven
Kari Christianson, Minneapolis
David Harris, Minneapolis
Emberly Johnson, Bloomington
Chris Mansfield, Bloomington
Scott McLaughlin and Andrea Benson, Sophia
and Isabel, Minneapolis
Anne Morrow, St. Louis Park
Marilyn Tuff, Golden Valley
Debra and Mike Venker, St. Paul
Andrea Weber, Minneapolis



Membership Form

☐ Individual \$15 ☐ Family \$25 ☐ Sponsor \$100 ☐ Life \$500 ☐ Other \$ _____

Memberships can be ordered online at
www.friendsofthewildflowergarden.org
or mailed with a check payable to:

Friends of the Wild Flower Garden, Inc.
Membership
P.O. Box 3793
Minneapolis, MN 55403-0793

Please specify if the membership is a gift.

*Each membership is tax-deductible to the extent
allowed by law.*

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____ Email _____

This is a gift membership from: _____

The recipient of your gift will receive a letter of welcome from the Friends of the Wild Flower Garden.

Donation Form

Donations of gifts or memorials may be made
at www.friendsofthewildflowergarden.org
or mailed with a check payable to:

Friends of the Wild Flower Garden, Inc.
P.O. Box 3793
Minneapolis, MN 55403-0793

*Thank you for helping to sustain the Eloise Butler
Wild Flower Garden and Bird Sanctuary.*

All gifts are tax-deductible.

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____ Email _____

This is a gift from: _____

In Honor / Memory of: _____

THE FRINGED GENTIAN

Friends of the Wild Flower Garden, Inc.
P.O. Box 3793
Minneapolis, MN 55403-0793
www.friendsofthewildflowergarden.org

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Nonprofit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Twin Cities, MN
Permit No. 90251

The Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden and Bird Sanctuary comprises 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 Garden is locked up during the winter months, but it still beckons. Here is a November view through the gate.

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.

*Printed with soy inks on
100% post-consumer waste paper.*