2021
History of the Friends of the Wild Flower Garden

Winter 2020/2021

2021 begins the 115th year of the Garden, the 69th year for the Friends and Susan Wilkins' 18th year as Garden Curator.

The SARS-coV-2 virus continued to spread, but with the advent of vaccine availability early in the year, beginning with older or vulnerable people, activity restrictions began to loosen. As the year went on, vaccine became available for those under age 65 and by the end of the year for all but the youngest children. This did not stop the spread of the virus however, due to variants and too many people not taking the vaccine or following safe protocols.

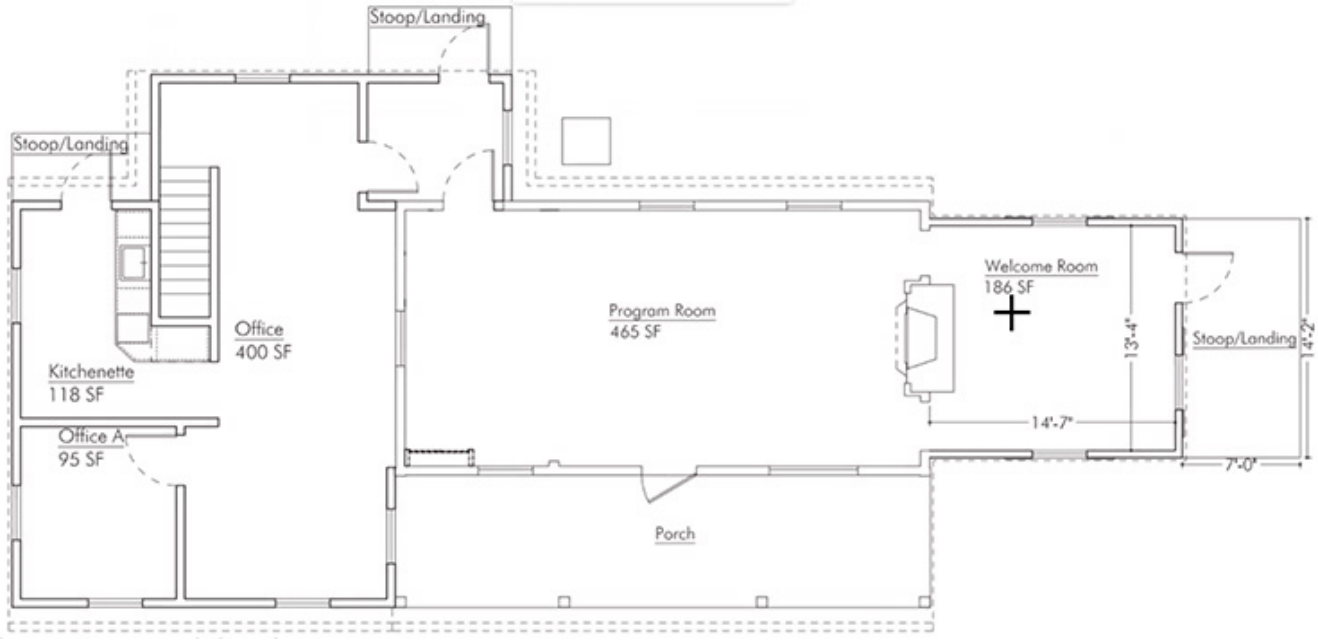
Jennifer Olson began her term as Friends President on January 1st and in a letter to the membership she wrote:

> The past year has been difficult and challenging. Despite a shorter season and fewer hours, the Garden staff welcomed over 23,000 visitors. The majority of the 2020 visitors were first time visitors. As a semi-retired physician, I feel finding ourselves in the natural world is therapeutic, a refuge from our busy and at times uncertain lives.
>
> I am so glad you are a fellow member. In 2020 the Friends funded the planting of 36 species of over 2600 plants in addition to 2000 plants funded by Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board.
>
> As members, we appreciate your financial contribution through your membership. We also would love you to visit the garden with friends and family. I would encourage you to share your talents with the Garden, writing for the Gentian, sharing photographs and memories, being involved as a volunteer or with special projects. Feel free to contact me with your ideas, suggestions, and concerns.

Jennifer Olson in the Garden teaching about what is needed for a Lady-slipper to grow. Olson photo.

The Shelter Improvement Project, first announced in 2019, then delayed in 2020 due to lack of a staff planner at the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board (MPRB), was further delayed at the beginning of 2021. The Friends Board met via Zoom with Emma Pachuta and new project manager Allison Dahlin of the MPRB on February1 for an update on the plans. The layout of the addition was modified to move the new staff addition forward so that it now abutted the front edge of the existing Shelter patio. This was done to avoid a substantial amount of hillside excavation at the opposite end at the back side of the new addition. Next, a welcome center room was proposed as an addition to the opposite end of the Shelter where the lean-to is. This would become a new entrance to the building, requiring no steps, and while the existing entrance will be kept, it would allow the current large room to be more usable for classes and group meetings. It was proposed that the Friends fund the welcome center. If a ground level entry point were not built, then the existing entrance would have to be redone to meet new codes. Following this meeting, the MPRB staff was to complete the necessary drawings and specifications so that the project could be bid.

Proposed floor plan for the Crone Shelter as of early 2021. Drawing MPRB



The concept of a welcome center at the Shelter was well received. Not only would it provide a ground level entry point into the shelter, but volunteer staffing could be used more extensively. The Shelter was to remain closed until pandemic protocols indicated it would be safe to reopen, but as the year moved forward, that point never came. Melissa Hansen's volunteer docents were unemployed in 2021, just like in 2020. Forty eight volunteers were on her roster, including 6 newly trained in early 2020 but who never had the chance to work. New applications were not being accepted until 2022.

The Shelter project meeting was incorporated into the first Friends Board meeting of the year, held on a Zoom link, like those meetings of 2020. This was Jennifer Olson's first Board meeting as Friends President. Susan Wilkins was the first to make a presentation at the meeting. In the fall 2020 issue of the Friends newsletter, *The Fringed Gentian*™, she had written:

> The Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board is working diligently to assure that each and every person in every corner of our beautiful City and beyond feels welcome, safe, comfortable and engaged while visiting public park spaces in Minneapolis, including the Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden. [Vol. 68 No. 3]

She now said that new signage would be installed at the top of the stairs to the Garden from the parking lot that would carry this welcome message in 15 languages, all of which are heard in the Twin City area. As part of the Garden's outreach program an activity center would be set up at the Wirth Beach during the Garden's open season. The Garden was to open on April 1st but the shelter was not expected to open anytime soon. During the winter months a few more green ash trees were removed from the Garden and some old dying maples and river birch. Brush piles from these removals were burned beginning on March 4.

The new Welcome sign at the Garden parking lot. Photo G D Bebeau

The Friends' Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee (DEI) put forth some ideas for the Board to explore, not just for the make-up of the Board, but also for connecting a more diverse group of people, young and old, with the Wildflower Garden.

Another topic for discussion was the cost of the newsletter. Lauren Husting had done an email survey of members in the email address file to understand what they liked, wanted, or were indifferent about the content of the newsletter. Eighty members responded, some were negative about the digital version but OK if it saved money; 70% connected with the Friends on the website; people wanted more communication in different ways - flower of the month, highlight plants, other media, or book reviews.
Gary Bebeau had provided the Board with discussion document on the cost of the newsletter and what could we do to use those funds better and more effectively. The basics of the document were:

> The Friends, are on average, spending 55% of our membership contributions on printing and mailing a newsletter. That is not sustainable for the following reasons.
> 1. The number of people benefited for the dollars spent is unsupportable.
> 2. We have no idea if the number of copies we provide to non-members result in any tangible benefits for us.
> 3. We have no idea if the copies sent to courtesy members are even read.
> 4. We do not have a policy statement substantiating the use of contributions in such manner and in such a large amount.
>
> Since we no way to judge the effectiveness of copies that are sent or otherwise provided to non-paying parties, we should use those funds for a more supportable purpose.
>
> His considerations were that the newsletter is an integral part of our education program and that it should be continued and that a certain number of print copies may be necessary. Several courses of action were set out, not all inclusive, but a new direction should be chosen. Any choice that involves printing or mailing copies (which is where the expense is) must be supported by a policy position which we currently do not have.

The Board discussed the topics and a few conclusions were made. Gary considered $2,000 the maximum the Friends should spend on the newsletter per year. This would accommodate all members that required a paper copy and provide extra copies for Garden visitors when the Shelter re-opened. Furthermore, $2,000 could currently be entirely supported by the Friends "other revenues" not contributions. Getting down to $2,000 required printing far fewer extra copies of each issue, especially the end of year issue which usually came out when the Garden was closing. The number of courtesy members getting paper copies should be restricted to the institutions that archive them and other

courtesy people placed on the email list. Jennifer recommended an abbreviated newsletter type document be used at the Shelter instead of the full 8-page version. Finally Colin Bartol and Gary agreed that handling the mailing ourselves instead of a mail service would save funds also.

Going forward into the year, the print runs of the newsletter were automatically restricted as the Shelter was not open to make use of them. Colin hired a new printer - Minuteman Press - and beginning with the summer issue, volunteer labor (Colin and Gary and family members) was used to do the mailing.

A special meeting of the Board was called for March 3 on Zoom to get an update from MPRB on the Shelter planning. Details of that meeting are incorporated into the text above.

Mary Steinbicker. *Minneapolis Tribune* photo.

A Friends life member, Mary Steinbicker, made the *Minneapolis Tribune* on March 27 when reporter Becca Most wrote a story on how Mary had taken up the practice of sending a daily postcard to someone she knew or had met, just as a gesture of goodwill and happiness. Mary used travel postcards that she picked up here and there. The whole thing started from a New Year's resolution for 2020.

Spring 2021

The Garden opened on April 15 with staff at a table at the front gate to greet visitors, as they had done in 2020. The paths in the Garden were still one-way and the Shelter was still closed but there was less concern for separating visitors by a certain number of minutes. Susan Wilkins wrote in the spring *Fringed Gentian*™ (Vol. 69 No. 1):

> We received a significant amount of positive feedback from Garden visitors in 2020, noting that the systems in place provided for a comfortable and safe visitor experience. We will continue to be guided by State of Minnesota and Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board practices and procedures related to the pandemic at the Garden throughout the season.

2021 visiting restrictions at the Garden: Staff at the gate, one-way paths and the Shelter closed. Photos G D Bebeau.

In that newsletter issue were articles by two new contributors - the reward of an effort made by Editor Colin Bartol. Rod Miller, a Garden neighbor and volunteer, wrote about the Great Horned Owl - a bird with a long history of being resident near the Garden. Karen Shragg, a retired naturalist, wrote of the appreciation for Eloise Butler's drive to preserve the Garden space when there are so many pressures on the environment around us. Other articles were on "Our Native Dogwoods" by Gary Bebeau and "The Art of Collecting Native Seeds" by Lauren Husting.

In the Garden, there was a burn of the prairie area on April 21st and portions of the hand rail along the steps from the parking lot to the front gate were removed as they were unstable. The rail dated back to a Friends project in 1975. Replacing the railing and the steps with something more user friendly would wait until budget funds could be applied. The MPRB was one of four finalists for the 2021 National Gold Medal Awards in Parks and Recreation Management, but lost out to Metro Cleveland.

Burning the prairie in spring 2021. MPRB photo

During May the Friends Invasive Plant Action Group (FIPAG) scheduled 3 pulls of Garlic Mustard in the area east of the Garden. Six volunteers from Aveda also came to help. Aveda has sent help for 15 years. Jim Proctor reported that during the winter someone or some group had constructed a ski run in the area and have moved out of the way branches and logs that had been placed to prevent erosion. Perhaps some signage was needed to protect the area.

A slope in the Maple Glen, cleared of Buckthorn, with native plants emerging in spring. Photo G D Bebeau

A Friends Board meeting was held via Zoom on April 12, which included another update from MPRB on the Shelter project. That was still in the documentation stage and no bid proposals had yet been let out, however, the effects of the Covid pandemic on the building supply industry were such that as pent-up demand for materials broke loose in early 2021, prices, especially of lumber, were so elevated that the MPRB staff saw no point in bidding at this time. More details emerge later in the year - see the autumn section.

Board discussion continued on several topics. The first topic was about how the newsletter should be circulated and how costs can be controlled. A consensus of opinion centered on 1) continuing paper copies for those that require paper, including the institutions that archive them, 2) put new members automatically on the email list, 3) put courtesy members that are not institutions on the email list, 4) limit how many extra copies are printed for non-member distribution, and 5) possible create a smaller handout for use in the Shelter.

The second discussion topic concerned membership and support. We should be outlining in our publicity information the various ways in which a person can support the Garden such as 1) membership support of the Friends, 2) gifting to the Friends without becoming a member, 3) volunteering for some of the Friends sponsored programs or Garden volunteer programs, and 4) contributing to our newsletter or other Board activities. Part of this discussion vectored into what our membership fees would be and Board members were asked to forward their ideas for debate at the next Board meeting.

New plants ready for Garden planting. Photo Jennifer Olson.

The required annual report to the Minnesota Charities Office of the Attorney General was distributed and approved. The Federal non-profit report had been filed in March by the treasurer.

Susan Wilkins told the Board that this summer she would have 20 Green Team members from the MPRB Youth Development Program assigned to the Garden for activities she directed.

Summer 2021

A summer Friends Board meeting was held on June 19 via Zoom and in person at Jennifer Olson's house. The membership topic from the April meeting was revisited. One immediate change would be dropping the gift membership category, replacing it with a gift-in-honor-of. Our contact with the honoree about the gift would include information on the Friends and how we can be supported plus a request for them to sign up for our emails and newsletter. Proposals for changing the membership categories were decided: The "Basic "membership rate, last changed in 2009, was merged with the Family/Duo rate at $25; the Sponsor rate remained unchanged at $100; the Sustainer rate became the Benefactor rate and increased to $250; the life rate increased to $1,000. These would be effective January 1, 2022 and would be announced at the Annual Meeting in September.

The Friends had not pledged any funds to the Garden this year in lieu of accumulating funds for the Shelter Improvement Project. Gary Bebeau recommended that some be pledged as it is part of our standard fund-raising appeal to support the Garden plant population. The Board wanted it limited to $1,000. Colin Bartol presented his ideas for creating a podcast about what visitors would see as they walked through the Garden. The idea had merit and needed to be determined who would do it and how to make it timely.

Garden staff at Wirth Beach Nature Station. MPRB Photo

Susan Wilkins reported that naturalists Jodi and Tammy were back on the Garden staff but that everyone else was new. Programs back in action were the Early Birders, Garden Story-time and and a suite of engaging evening programs like the Illuminated Trails tour and the Glow-in the Night Hike plus "pop-up" programs on a variety of Garden-themed topics. Each program drew 20 participants on average and occasionally 40 to 50. A special program was the Wirth Beach Nature Station that allowed for creative learning and enjoyment while meeting social distancing requirements at Wirth Beach at which over 2,370 kids and adults took part during the season. (photo previous page)

The summer issue of *The Fringed Gentian*™ (Vol. 60 No. 2) featured a review of FIPAG's work over the past 15 years in which Jim Proctor reviewed what had been accomplished in the areas around the Garden, the "Volunteer Stewardship Area," (VSA) and the various techniques that had been learned to deal with invasive plants. Work in the Maple Glen was nearing completion. Inside articles included Eloise Butler's descriptions of the flowers of summer, and a review by Jennifer Olson of John Moriarty's latest book *Minnesota's Natural Heritage*. He was to be the guest speaker at the September annual meeting. Jennifer Olson announced the annual meeting schedule of events.

Susan Wilkins reflected on how the Garden had begun the year:

> This past spring was delightful as well, with mild weather and just enough rain to allow for many of the woodland wildflower species to bloom for weeks on end. In many years, due to spikes of higher spring temperatures, strong winds, or extended dry spells, many species only bloom for days. The prolonged bloom times for many species allowed for more overlap of blooming plants and the layered display of woodland wildflowers for several weeks was truly synchronistic and a feast for the eyes and spirit.

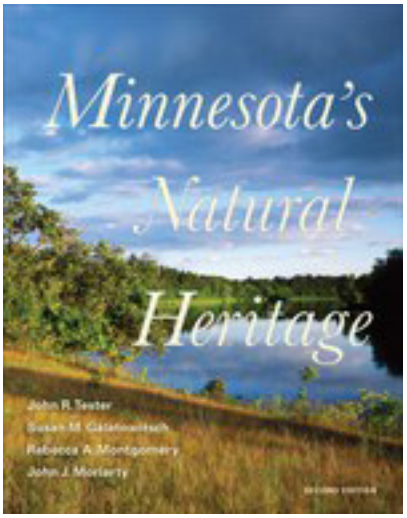
Autumn 2021

The annual meeting of the Friends was held on September 19, via Zoom again, as the increase in Covid-19 infections and hospitalizations warranted less close contact at an in-person meeting, which was how it was originally scheduled.

Elected to the Board at the meeting for one year terms or, under the bylaws, until the next election was held, were Candy Bartol, Colin Bartol, Gary Bebeau, Steve Benson, Kathy Connelly, Lauren Husting, Jennifer Olson, Jim Proctor, Sally Pundt, Steve Pundt, Pam Weiner and Susan Wilkins (ex-officio).

The special feature of the meeting was a talk by John Moriarty, senior manager of wildlife for Three Rivers Park District. He has written or co-authored five books on the natural world of Minnesota. His talk concentrated on the latest book - *Minnesota's Natural Heritage*. Minnesota hosts three of the world's ten biomes: the northern coniferous forests, the deciduous forests, and the prairie, each with its lakes,

wetlands, streams and rivers. The book covers all three allowing readers to comprehend our ecosystems and its future. Three of his books were offered for sale on the website following the meeting. President Olson donated his speaker's fee.



At the Board of Directors meeting following the annual meeting, the officers elected were: Jennifer Olson President, Candy Bartol Secretary, Gary Bebeau, Treasurer.

In committee roles were: Gary Bebeau - memorials money management and website, Jim Proctor - Invasive Plant Action Group (with non-board member Kari Christianson as co-chair), Colin Bartol - newsletter editor, Lauren Husting - media communications and non-board members Christi Bystedt as membership coordinator and Melissa Hansen - volunteers coordinator.

There was discussion about having a Friends fund-raiser in 2022 at the historic home of Mark Addicks, where we had a successful fund-raiser in 2015. President Olson is working on revising the membership information card that is primarily used for a handout in the Shelter and at events.

FIPAG held three Buckthorn pull events in October in the VSA of the Maple Glen. Because of the scare caused by the advent of Jumping Worms in the area volunteers were cautioned to not bring their own tools unless all dirt was washed off, to prevent spread of egg cases.

The repaired back Garden fence in 2021. Photo G D Bebeau

As volunteer activities were extremely limited this year, no annual Volunteer Appreciation Event was held. The fall issue of *The Fringed Gentian*™ (Vol., 69 No. 3) came out the 1st of November. The lead article had a description and photos of the creatures that show up in the Garden's trail cameras. Candy Bartol reviewed John Moriarty's book *A Field Guide to the Natural World of the Twin Cities.* This turned out to be the best seller of his books selected for sale on the website.. Gary Bebeau wrote an article about our native Oaks and how their dominance in Minnesota may be retained during this period of climate change. The final article by Lauren Husting summarized a recent book and film about water contamination - *There's Something in the Water.*

Susan Wilkins noted in her report that while we had a very dry summer, the Garden plants seemed to thrive. She added:

> It's been another year of sharing the beauty and joy of the Garden in many familiar and also adaptive ways during the on-going pandemic. Operating the Garden over these past two seasons has required incredible flexibility on the part of staff as we've been nearly constantly adapting and developing strategies that allow us to operate safely while engaging visitors with nature-filled experiences and programming.

Jennifer Olson, wrote that

> Another end of a Garden season that began with masks, one-way trails, staggered entry times and social distancing requirements and evolved to no restrictions. I hope you have enjoyed the seasonal transformations of each Garden Trail. In the late summer, the Upland Garden is my favorite with the contrasting goldenrods and the purple asters. I was excited to read Robin Wall Kimmerer's chapter of 'Asters and Goldenrod' in her book, *Braiding Sweetgrass*" in which the author discusses how indigenous peoples appreciated plants.

We were notified of the passing of several Friends members during the year.

Juannita 'Nita' Lussenhop, joined in 1994, and was a director from 1996 to 2005 and secretary from 1996 to 2005. (at left in photos below)

Marguerite Harbison, joined in 1993 was a director from 1994 to 2005, served as memorials chair and helped organize volunteer appreciation events. (in center in photos below)

John Haldeman was a member for 48 years. (at right in photos below)

Wrap-up of the year for the Friends:
Total Friends direct support for the Garden during the year was $1,000 for plants; additional educational mission expenditures totaled $1,801 Over the past 20 years the Friends have funded $397,000 for the Garden and educational program.

Donation support during the year was $15,876 from 67 donors. Memorials of $2,440 were received from 22 donors for 15 different persons. Name plates to be added to the Eliason Honor Board in the Crone Shelter were for former Friends director and secretary Juanita Lussenhop, member John Haldeman, and for Warren Johnson and Helen Wright King.

At the end of the year the Friends active paying membership was 140, plus 49 life members. Courtesy memberships were 21 for a total count of 210. Nine new members joined; 19 were dropped from the roster due to death or for being in-arrears; 15 courtesy members were removed from the courtesy list for various reasons. New members included 2 new life memberships, the same as 2020. In spite of many members not renewing their support for various reasons, a number of other members at the

sponsor and sustainer level continued their high level of support so that our average member payment (excluding life) was $68.54, compared with $50.56 in 2020.

Financial assets at year-end were $223,275.

Photo top of first page: The Garden wetland showing luxuriant growth along the new boardwalk with many Queen of the Meadow in bloom on July 13, 2021. Photo G D Bebeau.

Other references:
Minutes of the Board of Directors and other documents of the Friends of the Wild Flower Garden, Inc.

The Fringed Gentian™ Newsletter:
Vol. 69 No. 1 Spring 2021
Vol. 69 No. 2 Summer 2021
Vol. 69 No. 3 Fall/Winter 2021

Historical Climatology of Minneapolis-St. Paul Area by Charles Fisk.

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Text and research by Gary Bebeau.