



2024 History of the Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden and the Friends of the Wildflower Garden

Winter 2023/2024

2024 is the 118th year of the Garden, the 72nd year for the Friends and Susan Wilkins' 21st year as Garden Curator. Jennifer Olson began her fourth year as Friends President.

Highlights of this year include the construction of two new storage buildings for the Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden (EBWG), the replacement of a large section of upland fence with the addition of several acres to the Garden, the completion of the bee survey, an increased number of visitors and volunteer hours and the beginnings of a plan to restore a new hillside adjacent to the Garden to its original habitat.

Reelected MPRB Commissioners: The newly elected Commissioners of the Minneapolis Park & Recreation Board (MPRB) took office at the beginning of the year. Re-elected commissioners Meg Forney and Elizabeth Shaffer frequently volunteer with the Friends Invasive Plant Action Group (FIPAG). Commissioner Forney was chosen President of the Board for another year.



Upland area to be included within the Garden by a new fence.

A board of directors meeting of the Friends was held February 5 at the home of former Friends president Pam Weiner and also on Zoom. Garden Curator Susan Wilkins reviewed her 2024 plans for Garden staffing and Garden projects. This past winter several Wildflower Garden naturalists were retained via a grant from the Loppet Foundation to run a winter program at the Trailhead Building in Wirth Park. The program included indoor and outdoor activities plus Storytime for the young people.

Susan was expecting the return of some of last year's naturalists for the 2024 season and she was also proposing to the MPRB the creation of a new .75FTE position for Garden programming to assist her.

Improvements planned for the coming months included a pair of new storage sheds for the Garden's equipment which will be built near the restrooms and outside of the current Garden fence. This would free up some space in the current shed which is also used as an office, and take care of much of the Garden's equipment currently sitting outside the existing shed. Construction began in April of 2024.

Construction begins in April 2024 for the two storage sheds. These two photos are a small scale version of what would take place if the Shelter Improvement Project were to happen.



Below: Excavated soil from the construction site piled onto the slope between the parking lot and Garden front gate. Photo J. Olson.



An old issue that does not go away is the 2019 plan for improvements to the Martha Crone Shelter. The MPRB again planned to put the project out for bid. After the initial bids on the project were rejected in 2020 several issues came to light that were not known when the Friends approved support for the improvements. First, a large amount of earth would have to be moved out of the Garden in order to create a retaining wall in the hillside behind the proposed shelter addition. Second, to access the site, the Garden paths proved unusable and a 12-14 foot wide pathway would have to cut through the wooded hillside from the front gate to the construction site, removing a number of trees and creating a slope subject to much erosion. Third, the storage building construction may eliminate the need for some of the planned storage improvements. Fourth, the success of the entry kiosk indicated that a welcome center might be better placed near the entrance to the Garden, not in the Garden at the Shelter. For these reasons, the Friends have advised the MPRB to abandon the improvement project and concentrate on a Garden entrance plan.

Once again, the board approved buying Junior Ranger patches for young Garden visitors. Board member Colin Bartol sourced the patches once again. He originated the idea in 2014.



The Friends display at the local Sumner Library branch that started in 2022 was halted this season as the library closed for remodeling.

Melissa Hansen was coordinator of shelter and kiosk volunteer recruitment and scheduling again this year with training sessions scheduled in April and May for the new volunteers. Both training and background checks are now handled by the MPRB instead of the Friends. New volunteers would now be able to work in the shelter and not just the entry kiosk, a restriction established last year. A minimum number of eight shifts per season were required to be a volunteer. Each work shift was 2.5 hours.

The EBWG Florilegium Project, began in 2010, is to wrap up this year with at least 100 drawings accepted. During the past winter there was a display of them at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts. A book is considered.

The Friends Board continued a discussion of becoming a supporter / donor organization instead of a membership only organization. This discussion would continue throughout 2024.

During the 1st quarter the Friends received their 24th annual distribution from the Mendon Schutt Family Fund at the Minneapolis Foundation. At \$1,455, it was the largest annual amount to-date. Almost \$25,000 has been received over the past 24 years from a bequest of Elizabeth Schutt, friend of the Wildflower Garden.



Bloodroot by Marilyn Garber from the Eloise Butler Florilegium.

Spring 2024

Prior to the opening of the Wildflower Garden the Friends held a board meeting at President Jennifer Olson's home on April 8. Susan Wilkins spoke about the upcoming season. She has 4 naturalists returning from 2023 plus 2 new hires and 2 interns. When construction of the two new storage sheds began in April, additional parking spots were marked out on the approach drive as several of the lot spaces were going to be used for construction supplies. Furthermore, parking would be free this season. School tours were being arranged for spring and summer and the new pollinator garden at the front entrance drive received some national recognition from Doug Tallamy's Homegrown National Park Organization.



Some of the Garden Staff that served during the 2024 season - Debbie, Katie, Nicholas, Keygan, Linette, Hana, Kim. MPRB Photo

Treasurer Gary Bebeau presented a budget and the annual Minnesota Charities Report for approval. Both were approved and the Charities Report was filed.

There was more discussion on what by-law changes were needed to move the Friends from a membership organization to a supporter/donor focused entity. The need for a social media coordinator was brought up and the need to expand the capacity of the bulk email program. The Friends were currently using the free offering from MailChimp but it will be necessary to go to a paid offering where there are less restrictions on how many emails per month and per day can be sent. In late June Gary Bebeau moved the email database from MailChimp to MailerLite after evaluating costs and plans offered by a number of vendors. The Friends board approved funding the program on June 24. The new program allows 12,000 emails per month, no daily limit, and has a



Construction continued into the summer on the storage building at the Garden.

lower fee for non-profits. An additional user was allowed so Jim Proctor could not administer emails himself to the FIPAG list. Jim also began using the Facebook account for FIPAG postings.

With spring weather cooperating this year the Garden opened on schedule on April 16. The Friends Invasive Plant Action Group (FIPAG) led by Jim Proctor and Kari Christianson had extensive plans for the 2024 season. The first three events concerned finding garlic mustard in the new work areas of the buffer zone SE of the Garden fence.

After that more buckthorn was cleared in the area of Old Andrews's Cave on the west side of the Garden. A path follows the Garden fence line on the west side and the path-side nearest the fence had been cleared years earlier and our photo below shows what a difference that makes in the return of native vegetation. Now a wide swath on the opposite path-side was being cleared ending at the hillside of Old Andrew's Cave.



The FIPAG crew was sparse but happy during a rainy first scheduled event of the season on April 28. Photo Jim Proctor.





Above left: Part of the area cut on June 2nd. Photo Jim Proctor. Right: part of the brush pile from June 2nd.



Below: A pan of the entire area worked on June 2nd Photos Jim Proctor.

By the end of June a dozen events were held. Work was now focused on the area southeast of the Garden where a dense slope of buckthorn was being uncovered to reveal a pond at the base of the slope and expose several mature oak trees, remnants of the original oak savanna habitat. In one cleared area new shrubs and native plants were sown.

Jim Proctor scheduled tours of area for MPRB persons to see the work and how buckthorn elimination is done successfully. Most buckthorn elimination efforts are not long-term successes because of the lack of follow-up work.

The Barred Owls were again nesting near the Garden entrance so the lead article in the spring newsletter, *The Fringed Gentian*[™], featured all owl species known to be or have been seen in and around the Garden. Local birder Ron Miller wrote the article with photos supplied by a number of other birders. This issue was mostly about birds: Candy Bartol wrote about bird names; newsletter editor Colin Barton wrote about the Merlin Bird App. The winter bird count of December 2023 was not mentioned, but the 116 counters participating in the Minneapolis West Circle, which includes Wirth Park, counted about 1,300 birds.



Barred Owl. Photo Christopher Boser

Elsewhere in the newsletter Susan Wilkins wrote of the effect of the gentle winter:

I will say that the Garden has quietly carried on through this nearly snowless winter and as of mid-March is showing the earliest signs of spring peaking through the leaf litter. A wee wild leek blade, a hint of green from last year's Christmas fern fronds, silver maple and pussy willow

flowers in bloom. For now, the warm days of early March have subsided, and the beginning hints of growth are slowed by cooler temperatures. Something for which I think we are all, many of us at least, pleased with.

Jennifer Olson wrote about “what is awe?” and the psychological implications of experiencing it - such as on a Garden visit.

When I volunteer at the entrance kiosk at the Garden, almost everyone has a smile when they leave. The plants, the trees, and the quiet, I believe, have given them awe. Speaking about the remarkable Eloise Butler and the Garden she created humbles me. I’m amazed at all that she accomplished, starting with her vision of a Garden to preserve the botanical wildness of Minneapolis, securing the land, promoting the Garden, and then tending it for 26 years. Eloise reflected, “I live and move and have my being in and for the Wild Botanic Garden.” Theodore Wirth concluded, “for a full quarter of a century her useful life has been spent in a labor of love.” I am in awe.

Jennifer created and had printed postcards with Friends donation information and a Lady’s Slipper photo and also a bookmark with Tamaracks. Both were in the Crone Shelter for the public to take.

Friends of the Wildflower Garden
Dedicated to Protecting, Preserving
and Promoting the Interests of
**The Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden
& Bird Sanctuary***

*Owned and operated by
Minneapolis
Park & Recreation Board

* Founded in 1907
* Fifteen acres of wetland, woodland and meadow environments featuring 600 native plant species, 130 resident and migratory bird species, and diverse wildlife
* Open April - October

Learn More
FriendsOfEloiseButler.org

Tell a friend!

Summer 2024

At the Friends summer board meeting on June 24 at Jennifer Olson’s house, a number of issues dealing with the storage shed construction were reviewed, especially parking issues, tree root damage from utility excavation and the large pile of dirt dumped onto the grass between the parking lot and the entrance. It would later be hauled away but all this indicated what issues there may be with the MPRB’s plans to move forward with the much larger shelter project. There was majority belief that the Friends letter of intent to participate for \$100,000 in the shelter project should be rescinded in favor of a front entrance project. There was no motion to do so as further talks with the MPRB staff were necessary, but the motion to do so was made later in the year. Several hazards in the Garden were discussed including the lack of a suitable handrail at the entrance steps after the old one fell apart and the drop-off from the end of the boardwalk in the wetland. These were fixed by the MPRB carpenters in the fall.

Several events were approved for scheduling: Volunteer Appreciation on October 27 and the Friends Annual Meeting on September 25 with guest speaker Heather Holm.

The summer issue of *The Fringed Gentian*TM was focused on the Quaking Bog and International Bog Day on July 28th. Articles were written by Genna Souffle, Bruce Jarvis and Lauren Hustung. Jennifer Olson wrote on the history of how the Showy Lady’s Slipper became the state flower.

Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden & Bird Sanctuary

**BUMBLEBEE COMMUNITY
SCIENCE PROGRAM**

SELECT SATURDAYS AND SUNDAYS FROM 1:00 - 2:30PM
SUNDAY - JUNE 30
SATURDAYS - JULY 20 & AUGUST 3

Join entomologist and researcher, Dr. Elaine Evans, from the University of Minnesota, for a guided citizen science project surveying the many bumblebees present in the Garden.
Meet at the Garden's front gate.

Email or connect on social media for more info:
ebwg@minneapolisparke.org

Minneapolis
Park & Recreation Board

Susan Wilkins column in the newsletter highlighted all the Garden activity in the first two months of the season: 85 nature focused programs presented, over 500 volunteer hours put in, 44 docent volunteers trained, over 15,000 visitor engagements at the welcome kiosk. Analise Kruse and George Walker are the two summer interns at the Garden. For Garden Storytime two notable volunteers readers were Parks Superintendent Al Bangoura and Parks Police Chief Jason Ohotto.



MPRB Superintendent Al Bangoura at Storytime in the Garden. MPRB Photo.



MPRB police chief Jason Ohotto at Storytime in the Garden. MPRB photo.

On three weekend days during the summer the Garden put on a Bumblebee Community Science Program in conjunction with the second year of the Garden's decennial bee survey. Staff from the University of Minnesota Bee Lab instructed Garden visitors on how to capture bumblebees which were then identified by species by the lab staff.

Garden visitors on how to capture bumblebees which were then identified by species by the lab staff.

Below: Captured bumblebees are sorted as to what plant they were found on prior to identification by the Bee Lab staff.



The final event on August 3rd wrapped up the survey and during the upcoming winter the lab will be tabulating the results of the survey.

The pollinator meadow established at the entrance to the Garden off of Theodore Wirth Parkway in the fall of 2023 lived up to its name this summer. Some additional planting work was done in the spring by the Garden staff with the successful result shown in the photo. The project was part of the Turf to Pollinator Garden Program funded by the Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF). Wilderness in the City and Metro Blooms were project partners with the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB).



At the end of August the Friends had the second opportunity to have a table representing the Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden at the Minnesota State Fair. The exhibit took place August 28-29 in the Horticulture Building in the section where garden clubs engage the public. It was staffed by 12 Friends volunteers, the same group as the prior year. Jennifer Olson managed the entire affair, arranging volunteer time, parking passes, wildflowers to display from Friends gardens, and input from the archives at the MPRB for old photos taken by Mary Meeker who Eloise called "the photographer of the Garden." This would be the second Wildflower Garden exhibit at the State Fair since Eloise Butler held hers in 1910 through 1917. The flower vases were the old brown slip stoneware that had been in the Crone Shelter attic for years.



Fall 2024

The 72nd Annual Meeting of the Friends was held on September 25th at 7 PM in the fireside room of the Eddie Manderville Chalet in Wirth Park. Friends member Bob Ambler set up the technology end of the meeting with projections and Zoom link. Guest speaker Heather Holm gave an illustrated lecture on “Oaks, Fire, and Climate Change.” Part of her talk was about the results from a recent oak savanna restoration project that has been ongoing for five years. The before and after tabulation of improvements in habitat for pollinators, birds and mammals were impressive.

Heather Holm is a pollinator conservationist and award-winning author of four books: *Pollinators of Native Plants* (2014), *Bees* (2017), *Wasps* (2021) and *Common Native Bees of the Eastern United States* (2022). Both *Bees* and *Wasps* have won multiple book awards including the American Horticultural Society Book Award (2018 and 2022 respectively).



Guest speaker Heather Holm. Photo-Holm

Below: Heather Holm delivers her talk at the Friends Annual Meeting on September 25th.



There was a brief business meeting at which these directors were elected for the coming year: Candy Bartol, Colin Bartol, Gary Bebeau, Bruce Jarvis, George Lawton, Jim Proctor, Jennifer Olson and Pam Weiner. Director Steve Benson did not stand for re-election after serving 29 years on the Friends Board of Directors.

At the annual meeting Jennifer Olson spoke with two possible new directors - Friend member Mary Bolla and Joelle Hoeft. Both agreed to serve if the board approved. All board members were in favor. They would attend the first board meeting in 2025 and be more formally appointed.

Fix-ups:



Above left: fixing the end of the boardwalk by raising the approach. Right: Smoothing the path by covering the water channel.

The MPRB carpenters had time in the fall to supervise a volunteer teen work group to fix a few hazards in the Garden. In the wetland the south end of the boardwalk, after the first years of settlement, had a one foot step-up. That was remedied easily enough by raising the approach path. Outside the wetland the path along the back fence was deteriorated where the water draining from the wetland passes under the path. A small boardwalk fixed that. The handrail along the steps from the parking lot to the front gate which had deteriorated badly of late and completely fallen apart in the last two years was replaced. Those front steps had been built in 1972 following completion of the Martha Crone Shelter. The Friends requested a handrail in 1972 but due to “budget” it was not installed until 1975, so the old one was ancient as far as handrails go and we are glad to see it go.



New handrail along the front steps replaces the original 1975 handrail.

FIPAG for 2024: The Friends Invasive Plant Action Group (FIPAG) conducted 20 events during the year beginning with garlic mustard work in the spring with three scheduled sessions in April/May, although the first was a bit wet. On June 2 an effort was made along the trail on the west side of the Garden fence to widen a swath of removed buckthorn in the area of Old Andrew’s Cave. Buckthorn had been removed years earlier on the path side nearest the fence and the photo shown above in the Spring section illustrates the difference between restored and unrestored section highlights the restoration effects.

Work then moved to the new area southeast of the Garden where a pond, once obscured by nonnative honeysuckle and buckthorn, was being restored to a new meadow of native herbaceous plants, some of

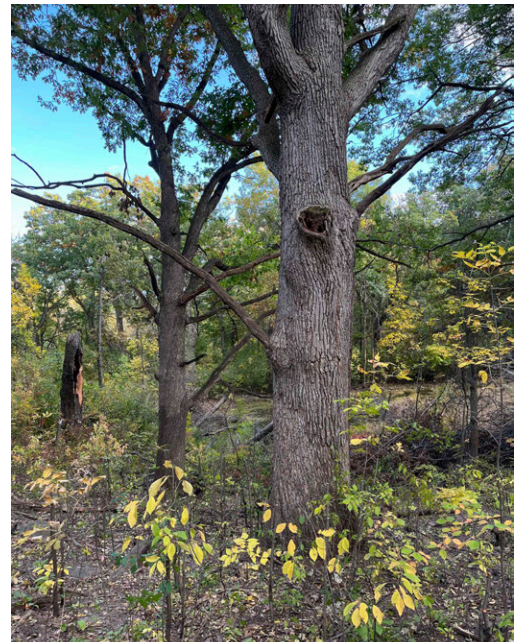
Below: The FIPAG work area established in 2023 with pond and mature oaks.. Photo Jim Proctor.



which were planted in the fall of 2023. During early summer FIPAG was in the process of growing out hundreds of plants from seed purchased by the Friends. A small number were ready to plant during a June 15 work session. Then they started tackling dense buckthorn among the beautiful ancient white oaks adjacent to the area cleared in 2023. These work sessions continued with “pop-up” dates when time was available on quick notice to the volunteers, ending with 3 scheduled-in-advance sessions to end the work in October.

In October Jim Proctor wrote to the volunteers:

Just look at these pictures! I think the savanna pond area is becoming one of the most beautiful spots in the Minneapolis Park system. Gorgeous old white



oaks; an open woodland with long sight lines; a pothole pond with emergent vegetation where owls bathe and wood ducks gather; a large red oak snag that provides habitat for wildlife; a very lengthy white oak limb that is truly a sight to behold.

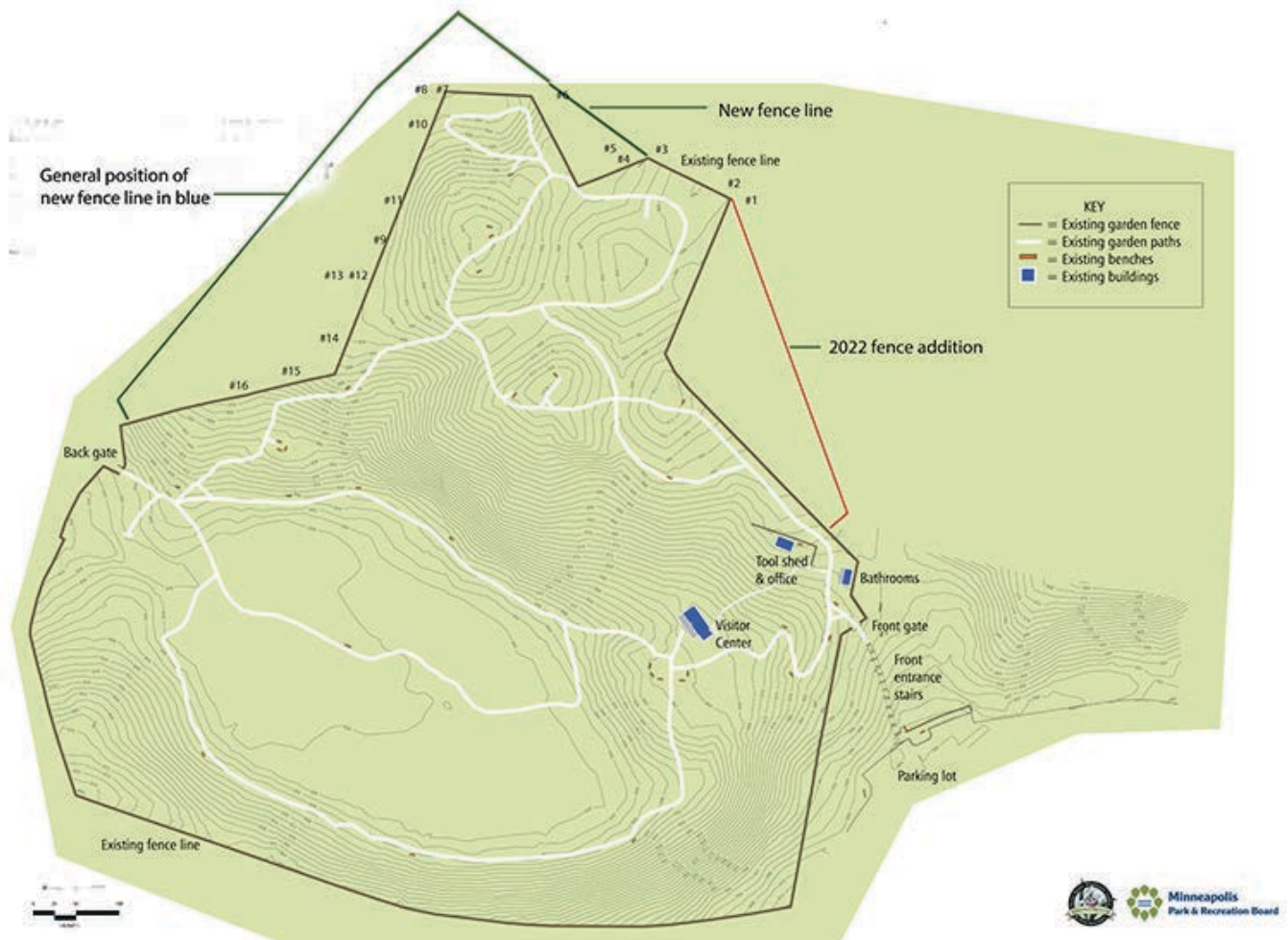
In the fall *Fringed Gentian*TM, the pollinator theme highlighted in Heather Holm's presentation was continued with the articles "Praise for Wasps as Master Pollinators" by Candyce Bartol, "Minnesota's Bees and Butterflies are in Trouble" by Lucas Rhodes and "The Brown-headed Cowbird: A Niche in Nature" by Howard Towle. Garden Naturalist Keygan McClellan wrote about the fireflies at Eloise Butler. Susan Wilkins provided a summary of Garden activity, which is highlighted later in this history and Jennifer Olson summed up the Friends volunteer activities.

Jennifer provided several quotes from Garden visitors:

"This Garden is my sanctuary." "I come every week and this is my sanctuary." Two women from Ethiopia just "wanted to spend time with the flowers."

The Fence Project

The most costly project for the Friends since Phase II of the wetland boardwalk in 2019 was completed in November. The new fencing in the upland replaced all the old 1946 cyclone fence on the upland side of the Garden from the point where the MPRB fence work ended in 2022 all the way to the back gate path. In the process, the perimeter of the Garden was extended outward to incorporate an area that had been cleared of invasives over the past 15 years, adding several acres to the Garden. The diagram map indicates the approximate new perimeter. Total cost - \$95,533.





Volunteer Appreciation Event:

The annual Volunteer Appreciation Event sponsored by the Friends and the Wildflower Garden was held on the evening of October 27th for all the volunteers who contributed their time at the Garden. The group includes Friends docents, Friends Invasive Plant Action Group (FIPAG) volunteers and Park Board Garden volunteers and support staff. The Friends arranged rental space, at Lake of the Isles Lutheran



Church, provided beverages and food, catered by Christo's Catering, and Susan Wilkins provided desserts and a belt-pack gift. Thanks to Pam Weiner for organizing the event. This is always a fun event with raffle prizes, arranged by Pam, for almost all attendees. The entire management staff the the MPRB Environmental Stewardship Division, which is responsible for the Wildflower Garden was in

attendance: Jeremy Barrich, Assistant Superintendent; Deb Pilger, Director of Environmental Management; MaryLynnPulscher, Environmental Education. Commissioners Meg Forney and Elizabeth Shaffer were also there.

The Shelter Improvement Project:

A sum-up the years events concerning this project was stated in the opening pages of this year's history. The final details are these:

- In May Jennifer Olson met with Commissioner Elizabeth Shaffer with the heads of the Environmental Stewardship Division (Barrick, Pilger, Pulcher) along with Susan Wilkins and Michael Schroeder (Assistant Superintendent for Planning) where the discussion centered on the original contractor bid being much too expensive and that construction outside the Garden would be better.
- In the summer when the utility storage sheds were under construction, it became evident of the types of problems that would be encountered if the project were to be in the Garden itself - severed roots, compressed soil, large dirt piles, removed trees, erosion.
- Elizabeth Shaffer viewed the site with Jennifer Olson. Jennifer and Jim Proctor took Commissioner Meg Forney on a tour in July to explore the same damage.
- On August 6, Elizabeth Shaffer set up a meeting for District 4 constituents and Jennifer Olson to have a talk with Superintendent Al Bangoura about the same concerns. No one was in favor of such a disturbance within the Garden.
- Commissioner Shaffer later confirmed with Jennifer Olson at the October Volunteer Event that she had contacted Michael Schroeder to advise that no construction be done in the Garden. He agreed.
- On November 6 pink ribbons had been attached to the front gate and to trees all the way done to the shelter, outlining where a road would have to be cut for the shelter construction. This was the stated purpose by one of the workers who was working on the new storage buildings that day
- The MPRB staff had the ribbons taken down.

This is where the affair ended in 2024 with some obvious cross-purpose work taking place between MPRB departments.

Garden highlights of the year were these:

- 54,351 visitor engagements were tallied by October 31
- of those 24,559 were at the Kiosk
- 16,701 were in the Crone Shelter
- 190 volunteers provided 1,926 hours at and around the Garden
- 4,473 persons participated in a Garden program
- The seasonal education staff was 10
- The back storage area of the Crone Shelter was converted to staff office space
- Entrance drive signs were newly designed
- The parking lot was re-striped
- One bathroom was converted to all gender use.

The Florilegium Project: In the Wildflower Garden, some of the artists demonstrated the process of making a drawing at the Martha Crone Shelter on October 19, 2024. (see poster) Some completed work was on display. As 2024 ended, the goal of up to 110 accepted drawings was being approached.



On November 22 Friends life member George Bridgman passed away. He was a notable volunteer at the Martha Crone Shelter for many years and was the son of Betty Bridgman who had served in many positions with the Friends beginning in 1961.

On December the 15th the 3rd Annual Audubon Winter Bird Count was held in Wirth Park (part of the Minneapolis West Circle). The 2022 count was the first in 60 years. It was brought to the Friends attention during the year that one of our longest-termed members, Mr. J. S. Futcher, was in the process of archiving at the history center his archive of the earlier bird counts in Wirth Park from 1939 through 1961 when counting ended due to lack of participants, which explained how the 60 year gap occurred.



George Bridgman with weed wrench. Friends photo.

Wrap-up of the year for the Friends:

Total Friends mission spending was \$109,796, the largest ever within a single calendar year. The funding included \$3,672 in educational grants, \$5,000 for the Friends portion of the bee survey, \$2,230 in volunteer support, \$850 for Jr. Ranger patches and \$95,533 for the fence project.

Donation support other than annual memberships during the year was \$38,683 from 96 donors. Membership support was \$6,840 from 104 annual supporters.

Memorials: Name plates added to the Eliason Honor Board in the Crone Shelter were for Shawna Pearson, Chris Wiersema, Marjorie Hague and Richard Fournier.

At the end of the year the Friends active paying membership was 114 plus 51 life members. Fourteen new members joined. The courtesy member class (21 names) was discontinued this year as all the libraries and individuals were now on the email and postal distribution lists for Friends information.

Financial assets at year-end were \$201,640.

Website activity during the year:

- Average monthly visitor count: 31,702.
- Average unique monthly visitor count: 16,048
- Average number of monthly pdf downloads: 4,667
- Average monthly number of web pages accessed: 81,415
- # of pdf downloads of the history books for the 12 month period: 2,559

Email's announce all of our publications. The email list at year-end had 533 persons, both members, FIPAG volunteers and anyone interested in our educational activities.

Photo top of first page: The completed new utility storage buildings at Eloise Butler.

Other references:

Minutes of the Board of Directors and other documents of the Friends of the Wildflower Garden, Inc.

*The Fringed Gentian*TM Newsletter:

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