



## A Note from Susan Wilkins

Garden Curator

### Winter in the Wildflower Garden

The gates are locked, but many critters, including Garden staff members, are at work in the Wildflower Garden and the office during this traditionally cold, quiet time of year.

Several maintenance tasks are carried out after the Garden is closed for the season. One important activity is removal of landscape scale invasive species. Many invasive species continue to photo-synthesize and produce carbohydrates quite late into the season. We turn this characteristic to our advantage. In mid November, when buckthorn, moneywort, garlic mustard, dame's rocket, periwinkle, reed canary grass and a handful of others still have green leaves, they are easy to locate, treat or remove—all without causing harm to desirable plants that have already gone dormant. In past seasons we had large amounts of buckthorn and, to a lesser extent, non-native honeysuckle to burn each winter. We can cross this task off the list now that all the Garden's large buckthorn and non-native honeysuckle specimens and thickets have been removed.

The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board's oak wilt management program begins in mid to late summer when oak wilt monitoring is carried out by Wildflower Garden staff members, with assistance from Kunde tree care consultants. After infected and susceptible trees are identified and before the cold sets in, our healthy but susceptible specimen oak trees are injected with a fungistat. In addition to these treatments, root grafts between healthy and diseased trees are severed in a process called *root graft barrier installation*.

This involves bringing a vibratory plow into the Garden, typically in November. The next step, carried out in late fall and winter as needed, is to cut down oaks infected with oak wilt and burn them on site, which is the best way to dispose of the infected remnants and prevent the spread of oak wilt in the Garden and Wirth Park.

In addition to our field work, a host of other activities bring closure to the passing season and help us plan and prepare for the upcoming one. These activities include compiling and summarizing program and maintenance data; recruiting, hiring and training interns and staff members; creating designs and ordering plants for future plantings; developing special programs, projects and volunteer opportunities with partner organizations; scheduling courses, tours and programs; pursuing outreach opportunities; developing promotional and natural history interpretation-related materials; and researching new techniques and technologies for key Garden management issues.

This season a unique project is underway to develop a Wildflower Garden management plan that will articulate our work and vision and set the tone for years to come. Our management plan will help us move forward more effectively toward our goal of caring for and bringing greater health and vitality to the Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden and the programming that occurs within its gates. An open house to share the plan with the public is tentatively scheduled for early spring 2009.



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## Garden Curator Notes - Spring 2009

*by Susan Wilkins*

Spring's bounty of beauty is nearly before us and the Wildflower Garden stands ready to welcome in this season of splendor and sensory renewal.

I have been thinking about what I find so irresistible about spring. Perhaps, more than anything, it is the re-awakening of my senses. Each year, when spring rolls around, smells, scenes and sounds emerge that I've nearly buried over winter's long hours.



Toadshade (*Trillium sessile*) Photo by Judy Remington

It's the surprise of breathing in and smelling a world enlivened: the scent of moistened woods rife with new promise, the bouquet of mossy greens emerging and the delectable aromas of life released from winter's grip. A quiet winter leads me to forget about the poetry of spring's song until I hear the first robin's call, the sound of crackling earth thawed and alive, the chirping of frogs fresh from their muddy retreat. Then there are the scenes and landscapes found only in spring. The still dark and open woods graced with a guarantee of rebirth: the inky, fruitful soil exposed; an unexpected patch of verdant growth; the wet, pulsing trunks of trees; and the lumps and bumps of moss-covered stones soon to disappear under the weight of life unfolded.

Spring cracks my wintry stiffness and dissolves the weariness I'd gathered, cloaked around me like a winter coat. Shedding one season as we walk into another, our senses awaken from their winter deprivation and lead us out the door and into the early spring garden. Please join us as we revel in this prized season and the stirring of our earthly senses

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Photos by Judy Remington.



## Garden Curator Notes - Summer 2009

*by Susan Wilkins*



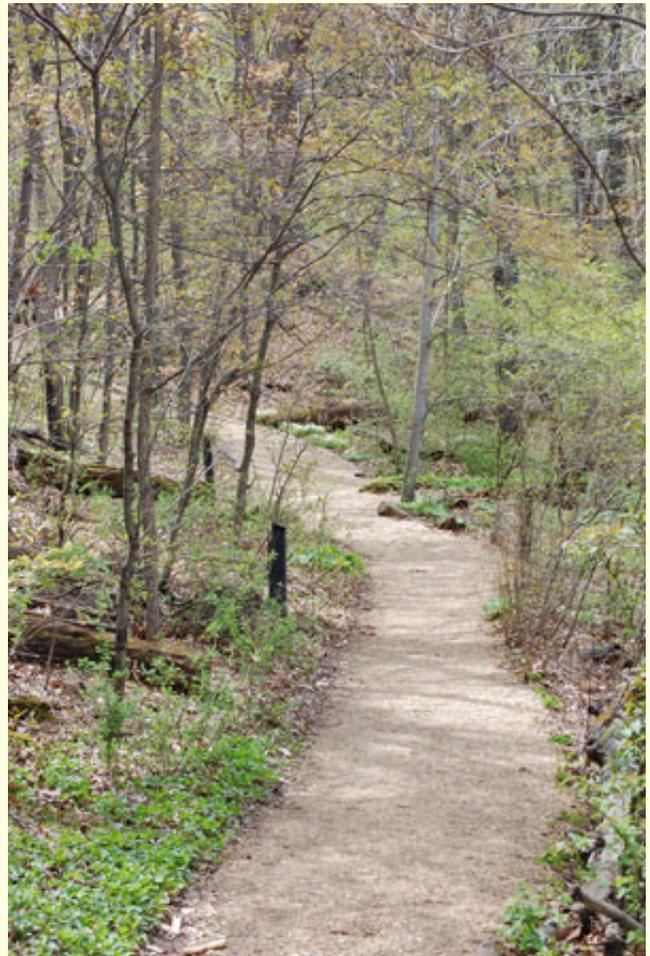
Spring was delightful at the Eloise **Butler Wildflower Garden**. Despite the dry weather, an abundance of native flora provided an inspired display of blossoming beauty in April and May. Thanks to the generosity of the Friends of the Wild Flower Garden, we purchased more than 1,400 wildflowers, native grasses and sedges for a planting project on the hillside adjacent to Violet Way trail (section shown below). Among the species planted were: Wild Columbine, Jack-in-the-Pulpit, Dutchman's-breeches, Silky Wild Rye, Wild Blue Phlox, Zigzag Goldenrod, Wild Geranium, Beak Grass, Tall Bellflower, Wild Ginger, Large-leaved Aster, Jacob's Ladder, Plains Oval Sedge, Bottlebrush Grass, Blue Cohosh and Red Baneberry.



Due to the dry weather, we watered the new plants frequently. In addition, Soil Moist was used to ensure that the delicate new additions had the moisture they needed to establish themselves in the Garden. Soil Moist is mixed into the soil in the planting hole before planting so that it can surround the roots of the new plant. Once watered, this polymer product expands as it fills with water. Over a period of time the product releases moisture into the root zone of each plant. We've had great success with the use of this product during the past few years and are pleased that we can use it as a tool to encourage plant health.



In addition to the Violet Way planting, a second spring planting took place in the wetland area. Garden staff members and three hardworking student volunteers from Breck School planted 145 trees and shrubs in the wetland and wet woodland areas.



Plants shown above  
Red Baneberry

These trees and shrubs included Tamarack, Speckled Alder, Balsam Fir, Black Spruce, White Spruce, Buttonbush, Bog Birch, Bitternut Hickory and Coralberry.

Dutchman's Breeches  
Tall Bellflower  
Wild Blue Phlox  
Celadine Poppy

The simple but essential act of planting the next generation of trees throughout the Wildflower Garden has been one of my most treasured experiences as curator. Knowing that we are planning ahead to maintain the continued ecological integrity of the Wildflower Garden is immensely rewarding.

Thank you again to the Friends for the generous donation for the spring 2009 Violet Way planting project. Each season the Garden grows more beautiful with the support of and varied efforts carried out by the Friends.

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### Full Plant List

Aster, Large leaved  
[Baneberry, Red](#)  
[Bellwort, Large-flowered](#)  
[Bishop's Cap](#)  
[Blue cohosh](#)  
[Celadine Poppy \(Wood Poppy\)](#)  
[Columbine](#)  
[Dutchman breeches](#)  
[Early Meadow Rue](#)  
Elm-leaved goldenrod  
[Jack-in-the-Pulpit](#)  
[Jacob's Ladder](#)  
Polk Milkweed  
Sweet Cicely  
Sunflower, Woodland  
[Tall Bellflower](#)  
Tall blue Larkspur  
[Turk's Cap Lily](#)  
[Wild Blue Phlox](#)  
[Wild Geranium](#)  
[Wild Ginger](#)  
[Zig-Zag Goldenrod](#)

Grasses:  
Bottlebrush Grass  
Beak Grass  
Silky Wild Rhy  
Plains Oval Sedge



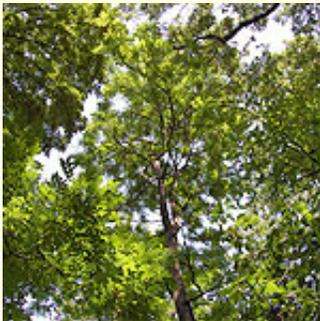
## Garden Curator Notes - Fall 2009

by Susan Wilkins

*"Our children no longer learn how to read the great book of Nature from their own direct experience, or how to interact creatively with the seasonal transformations of the planet. They seldom learn where their water comes from or where it goes. We no longer coordinate our human celebration with the great liturgy of the heavens." –Wendell Berry*



Red Stemmed Aster



Kentucky Coffeetree



Butterfly on Yarros



Bee on New Jersey Tea

**One of the principal reasons for creating the Wild Botanic Garden**, as the Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden and Bird Sanctuary was first named, back in 1907 was to preserve and enhance a natural learning environment for students of wild nature. [Eloise Butler](#) (photo below) articulated her vision of the Wildflower Garden's purpose when she wrote that the Wild Botanic Garden would serve "as a depot of supplies for the schools; as a resort for the lovers of wild nature; and to afford an opportunity to study botanical problems at first hand."

As a botany teacher, Eloise Butler understood the importance of field-based education and was passionate about getting her students out into the landscape to learn firsthand about plants and plant communities. As curator of the Wildflower Garden, she applied this understanding by welcoming groups of all ages and educational backgrounds to learn about the flora of the Garden.

Throughout the years, the curators, staff members, Friends and volunteers of the Wildflower Garden have understood the need for sharing the beauty and wisdom of the natural world with a variety of Garden visitors. Over many decades, the cultivation of this community, one that is rooted in a deep appreciation for nature, has created a great foundation for continuing the essential work of introducing the next generation to the wonders of the natural world.

Our work of educating the next generation of world citizens is of great consequence. In a study funded by the Nature Conservancy, researchers concluded that "the greatest threat to conservation ... may be more subtle than bulldozers and chainsaws ... Direct experience with nature is the most highly cited influence on environmental attitude and conservation activism."

A chief scientist for the Conservancy noted that "alienation from nature is a growing trend worldwide ... Today, the majority of humans live in cities, and urbanization is accelerating so rapidly that by 2050 only a small portion of the human population will live outside urban areas. The more disconnected city



dwellers are from natural landscapes, the less people understand how their well being is inextricably linked to the health of the natural world.”<sup>1</sup>

Here at the Wildflower Garden, our work is well aligned with the needs of our community for these times when nature seems farther away from our urban youth than ever before. Located in the heart of the Twin Cities metro area, our biologically diverse and dynamic Garden has served for more a century as a place to discover and continually rediscover the marvels and intricacies of nature. During the past few years our staff has built the capacity to serve a greater number of young people each Garden season.

With the addition in 2007 of an education programs coordinator position, we have been able to reach out to, welcome in and guide through the Garden a growing number of children (and adults) each year. Lauren Borer (photo at right) has been in this position since the spring of 2008 and has done a fabulous job of widening our circle of participants and creating and leading fun and enlightening tours of the Wildflower Garden and Quaking Bog with the assistance of Garden naturalists.

As we continue to develop our programs for youth and adults at the Wildflower Garden, we hope to encourage more people to experience the joy of being in relation to flowers, trees, butterflies, bees and the larger natural landscape.

Thanks to the Friends of the Wild Flower Garden, several groups have been able to visit the Garden this season without having to cover the sometimes unaffordable cost of transportation. The Student Transportation Grant Program has been a true success and a wonderful complement to our programs.



Tour by tour, we are introducing a generation to nature and to a world of irreplaceable riches. As our future stewards of Planet Earth, it is important that youngsters grow to love wild places and the sensibilities of the natural world. Richard Louv, nature deficit disorder authority, warns, as so many others do, that the futures of our communities, natural and human, are dire if we do not provide opportunities for children to connect with and develop a relationship to the natural world. Louv notes that **“studies have shown that people who love the environment said they had great outdoor experiences as kids. If that ends, where will our future environmental stewards come from?”**<sup>2</sup>

Let us continue our great work of leading the next generation of stewards and lovers of wild nature into the fields and forests, so that they too can uncover the mysteries and revel in the awe of a world still natural and full of life.

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1 Nature Conservancy press release, July 21, 2007. “Kids Picking TV Over Trees.” Press release refers to a research study authored by Patricia Zaradic, Ph.D and Oliver Pergams, Ph.D. and published June 2007 in “Journal of Development Processes”. Press release can be found at [www.nature.org/wherewework/northamerica/states/minnesota/press/press3075.html](http://www.nature.org/wherewework/northamerica/states/minnesota/press/press3075.html)

2 *The Nation's Health*, September 2009. “Movement to reconnect kids with nature growing nationwide: Working to improve children’s health.” Krisberg, Kim. <http://www.apha.org/publications/tnh/archives/2007/Oct07/Nation/>

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*Eloise Butler Photo courtesy Minneapolis Public Library, Minneapolis Collection, M2632B*