



## GARDEN CURATOR'S LETTER

By Susan Wilkins

I was taken, recently, by a wonderful statement made by esteemed essayist, environmentalist and farmer, Wendell Berry in *The Art of the Commonplace: The Agrarian Essays*. He wrote: "The care of the earth is our most ancient and most worthy and, after all, our most pleasing responsibility. To cherish what remains of it, and to foster its renewal, is our only legitimate hope."

This message struck me as a piece of relevant and timely wisdom from someone who knows well the soil and insects, the songs of birds, decay and rebirth. I trust the poignancy of his words knowing that Berry speaks from direct experience, from the timeless practice of placing his hands in the earth, year after year, and finding not merely a handful of soil, but the entire universe in his grasp.

Berry's message resonates with both the practical and transcendent qualities of what it means to be human in relation to the world around us, and it reminds us of the significance of being connected with nature. While it seems many of us deeply understand that caring for the world is a pressing matter, we don't always know what to do or how to do it. We see that our impact on the planet is real and can be destructive and degrading or enriching and restorative, but we don't always, honestly, know why.

What we've lost sight of, it seems, is that we belong to each other. And we belong to this earth. Unmoored from these relationships, I fear we have forgotten ourselves and muddled our most intelligent instincts to care for this beloved planet. Fortunately, through connecting with and tending to the natural world, and each other, we can rediscover our most pleasing responsibility and take joy in our rooted and deliberate acts of hope.

That is why, as another season in the Garden commences, I feel genuinely uplifted knowing that a community of stewards and stalwart friends of nature is doing the work that Wendell Berry spoke of right here at Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden. We are growing more than a very special botanic garden

within our 15-acre boundaries. We are growing ourselves, and each other, making room for a more beautiful, beneficent world in the process.

Below, I will share some of the highlights planned for 2013. For more information about current and future happenings at the garden visit the Minneapolis Parks & Recreation website ([www.minneapolisparks.org/ebwg](http://www.minneapolisparks.org/ebwg)). And I hope you'll stay in touch via Facebook ([www.facebook.com/pages/Eloise-Butler-Wildflower-Garden-and-Bird-Sanctuary/166629750054157](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Eloise-Butler-Wildflower-Garden-and-Bird-Sanctuary/166629750054157)) and the Friends of the Wild Flower Garden website ([www.friendsofthewildflowergarden.org](http://www.friendsofthewildflowergarden.org)) throughout the season.

- Garden staff, Friends board members and volunteers will lead a special program as part of the Ecological Society of America's National Conference in Minneapolis.
- The Conservation Corp of Minnesota (CCM) will be assisting staff with invasive species removal, primarily buckthorn.
- In partnership with Heart of the Beast Puppet and Mask Theatre, a new program exploring art and nature will be offered for families.
- On June 8 and 9, the Urban Birding Festival will include many family-friendly birding programs and activities in the Garden and Theodore Wirth Park.
- Large plantings along the Violet Way Trail hillside will continue as part of the effort to enhance this area.
- Nature Tots, a new program for parents and toddlers, will be led by staff.
- An expansion of the successful homeschool program developed by program coordinator Lauren Borer will include a new phenology club.
- Several new and special classes will be offered on topics such as watercolor painting, landscape photography, hands-on botany, medicinal plants of the garden and more.
- Honeybees will be housed at the Garden for a second season, and pollinator-focused programming for the public will include classes on bee basics, bumblebee surveys and a honeybee how-to series. ■

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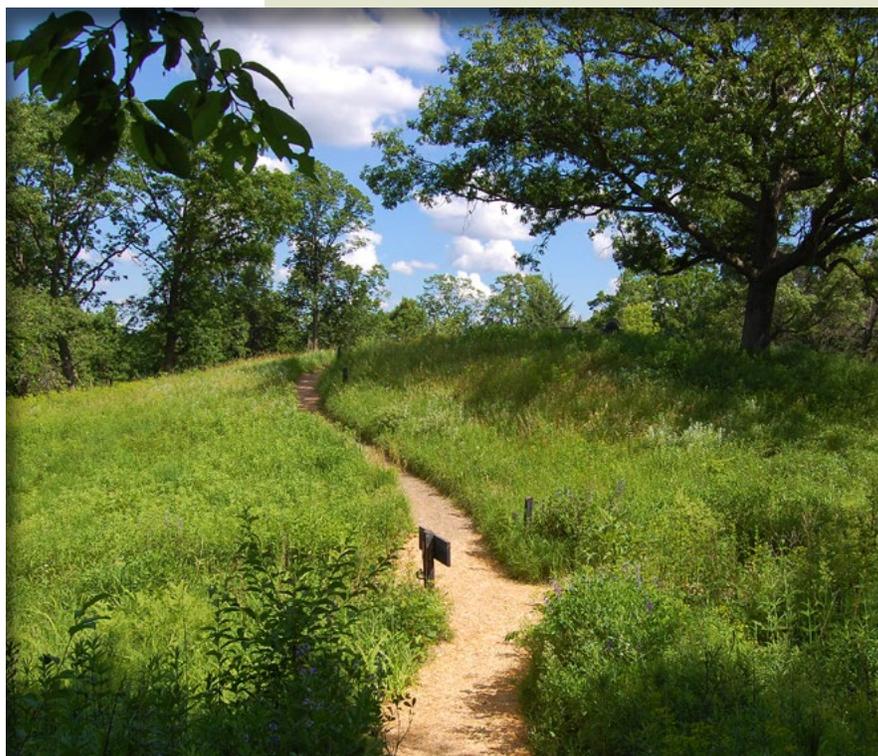


It's been a dynamic Garden season so far. With such a cool and snowy spring, we opened nearly a month later than scheduled. Unlike many years when the woodland wildflower blossoms are staggered throughout April and May, this season many bloomed all at once, offering the delights of the season in a condensed and crescendoed way. With the abundance of rain throughout the spring and early summer, the woodland areas could not have been more lush, nor the multitudes of Garden trees more bejeweled in luxuriant growth. In mid-June, the showy lady's slippers were in bud, but not blooming, keeping the shelter's phone line busy with expectant visitors calling to find out when they could plan a visit to see them in flower. In recent years, we've had showy lady's slipper flowering as early as late May.

By the end of June, the prairie was an oasis of green accompanied by colorful flourishes of blue false wild indigo and yellow golden Alexanders. These blossoms came later than in years past, but were welcomed all the more! Suffice it to say, some years it's quite obvious that weather and climate play a critical role in the growth, health and development of the plants, and every other living thing in the Wildflower Garden. (More on this in a minute.)

Speaking of spring, it was a wonderful season for birding. Many migratory warbler species were stalled out in our area in May, likely due to the weather or perhaps other factors, leading to a "warbler fallout," as birders say. Many other bird species were easy to see and abundant at the Garden and in greater Theodore Wirth Park this spring, as well.

Photo by Gary Bebeau



The Garden's Environmental Education Specialist Lauren Borer and staff naturalists continue to be as busy as ever teaching a wide array of classes to Twin Cities-area schoolchildren, as well as adults. The Garden truly is a haven for learning about the fabulous flora and fauna of our area. This season we are also undertaking a new project at the Garden. It is a systematic inventorying of the bee species of the Wildflower Garden, and the work is being carried out by Elaine Evans, a University of Minnesota doctoral candidate and entomologist.

Elaine is surveying the bee species of the Garden through a variety of methods throughout the duration of the spring, summer and autumn months. She will provide an analysis of her findings, which will be used by staff in education programs as well as visitor tours, handouts and displays. The information will serve as an important record and reference of the bee species found in the Wildflower Garden at this point in time. Thank you to the Friends of the Wild Flower Garden for generously supporting this project in partnership with the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board.

Several planting projects have already taken place as well, including the addition of more than 600 native ferns and wildflowers in the front entryway area along Trillium Trail. This planting was made possible by a generous donation from the Friends of the Wild Flower Garden. Over 20 species were planted, including large-flowered trillium, blue cohosh, maiden fern and bloodroot.

Now, returning to the subject of weather and climate: In recounting the Wildflower Garden season of 1930, Eloise Butler noted: "It seems amazing that Mother Nature—by blending two factors, temperature and moisture, in different proportions—can form an endless variety, no two seasons alike, [with] consequent variations in vegetation." Continuing her observations for that year, she remarks that spring was late and cold with continual downpours and early blooms came later than usual.

Eighty-three years later, I find her reflection equally fitting for this season and all others. The continual variations of moisture, temperature and humidity are constantly coming together in an endless array of combinations, creating different conditions in the Wildflower Garden and beyond, of course. It's such a simple way of understanding weather and climate; certain inputs lead to certain outputs or results. I wonder what Eloise Butler would have to say about the concerning issue of global warming and climate change. Would she see that the additional inputs, "in different proportions," of greenhouse gases would naturally lead to a change in outputs or results? That this, in turn, could potentially lead to consequent variations in vegetation? What would Eloise Butler have done in the Wildflower Garden, knowing that these changes in vegetation may occur as a result of a changing climate?

It's a hefty question and one that deserves thoughtful and continual study, reflection, strategizing and, ultimately, appropriate actions. As part of thorough management of the Wildflower Garden and the remarkable plant collections within, we will continue to explore this topic and issues pertaining to climate change as it relates to Wildflower Garden management. Look for more on this in future issues of the Gential. ♦

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It's been a bright, beautiful and busy season at the Wildflower Garden. With so many wonderful programs and projects unfolding this year, the Garden continues to blossom and grow. I've made note of a few program and project highlights below, but this letter is primarily about thanking so many of the dedicated people who make the Garden a special place for all.

This season, a record number of special programs on a wide variety of nature-focused topics were offered and enjoyed by youth and adults. These fee-based programs for school, scout and other youth groups, as well as an array of specialized programs for adults, were all offered on top of the Garden's regular public programming. Special thanks to Wildflower Garden staff, including Wildflower Garden Program Coordinator Lauren Borer; Garden Naturalists Tim Glenn, Jodi Gustafson, Elizabeth Heck, Rebecca Horton, Kimberlee Hunter, Karen Katz, Julia Manor, Tammy Mercer, Wes Nugteren, Ron Spinosa and Diana Thottungal; and Wildflower Garden Interns Kirsten Knappe-Langworthy, Dakota Sexton and Ja-nel Thompson. Thanks to your hard work and dedication, more and more people are learning about the beauty and wonders of the natural world.

I also want to thank the Friends of the Wild Flower Garden for all that they do to sustain and nourish the Garden season after season. In particular, I want to express my gratitude for the Friends' Student Transportation Grant Program. The project makes it possible for schoolchildren in the Twin Cities to visit the Garden by providing funds to subsidize their bus trip. For many of these children, a chance to be in nature at the Garden would not be possible without this support.

It goes without saying that the many volunteers here, whose love for the Garden is evident every day, are an integral part of the Wildflower Garden ecosystem! The shelter volunteers, legacy volunteers, preservation zone FIPAG volunteers and special projects volunteers all contribute to making the Garden the wonderful place and community resource that it is. I don't know what we would do without all of your support and dedicated efforts. Thank you.

I would also like to celebrate and thank two people with deep ties to the Wildflower Garden who are moving on to new pursuits: MaryLynn Pulscher and Diana Thottungal. MaryLynn,

Environmental Education Coordinator for the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board for the past 14 years, has taken a new position within the Park Board, as the Community Engagement Coordinator for Regional Parks.

MaryLynn has served as an amazing advocate and resource for all things related to the Wildflower Garden during her time as the Environmental Education Coordinator. Tackling big-picture issues, leading the charge on new initiatives, supporting the work of staff and volunteers and creatively finding solutions for problems large and small, she has always looked for ways to ensure that the health and integrity of the Wildflower Garden endures. Thank you, MaryLynn, and we look forward to working with you in your new role!

Diana, who started out as a volunteer before joining the Garden's team of naturalists 12 years ago, has made tremendous contributions during her tenure. Like MaryLynn, her accomplishments are too numerous to list in full here, but let me highlight a few of them. Many of the projects that Diana has curated over the years include inventories of various plant groups, such as the golden-rods and asters, not to mention the mosses, slime molds and fungi of the Wildflower Garden. Documentation of these species, and the associated guides, keys and other resources she has created, will continue to be used and expanded, benefiting innumerable people now and in the future.

More recently, she has been the lead instructor and program developer for a suite of programs offered to students from the University of Minnesota's Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI). These programs have been met with rave reviews. A mentor to all of us here at the Wildflower Garden, Diana will be missed, and we wish her the best in her retirement and look forward to seeing her wandering Garden's trails.

Moving on to project highlights, the bee inventory fieldwork being carried out by entomologist Elaine Evans this season has been completed for 2013. Over the winter, data will be compiled and analyzed so it can be used to help educate visitors about the types of bees found in the Garden and their importance to our ecological systems. Look for an update on this project in next spring's newsletter.

And last but not least, the bridge and boardwalk project is underway, thanks to the dedication and financial support of the Friends of the Wild Flower Garden. The Cuningham Group was selected and hired to work with the community, Friends of the Wild Flower Garden and Park Board staff to design an ecologically sensitive, beautiful and enduring bridge and boardwalk in the wetland area. As of late October, the concept plans for the project were still in development. We will post periodic updates about this project, including dates for community open houses, on the Wildflower Garden's homepage throughout the winter and early spring.

One final note of thanks goes out to everyone, including all of the Wildflower Garden visitors and supporters from afar. Each and every person who walks through the Garden gates, or has a special place in their heart for the Garden, helps make the Wildflower Garden what it is. Thank you. ■



Smooth blue aster  
photo by Gary Bebeau

