



## President's Report Winter 2009-2010



### Dear Friends,

Minnesotans consider themselves hardy Northern types, experts on autumn's cold rains and winter's pains and pleasures. We like to recall the severity of our childhood treks to school in the harsh winds of January and the drifts of February. We can be rhapsodic describing the glories of the last crimson leaves and the exquisite beauty in snowscapes and ice crystals.

We cope well, by and large, and we are proud of our ability to function and even thrive during these darker, colder seasons. But what do we really know about their role in the lives of other species? Our tomatoes and petunias are surely dead at first frost, but many plants survive the winter and come back with more vigor as years pass. The play of our cycle of seasons upon the lives of plants has long fascinated students of nature. One hundred fifty-six years ago, when Eloise Butler was a toddler, Henry David Thoreau wrote this in his journal:

"Consider what a vast crop is thus annually shed upon the earth. This, more than any mere grain or seed, is the great harvest of the year. This annual decay and death, this dying by inches, before the whole tree at last lies down and turns to soil. As trees shed their leaves, so deer their horns, and men their hair or nails. The year's great crop. I am more interested in it than in the English grass alone or in the corn. It prepares the virgin mould for future cornfields on which the earth fattens. They teach us how to die."

Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson and a generation of their educated young followers in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century believed strongly in the creative powers of nature and the clear spiritual essence of the natural world. Eloise Butler is said to have modeled her Garden shed on the cabin at Thoreau's Walden Pond. Other writers and thinkers have had similar sensibilities.

Last fall I attended a course taught by Thomas Moore, author of *Care of the Soul* and other books about psychology and theology. He described the soul as a living rhizome that is always present but never seen. Sometimes it produces the flowers and fruits of life as we know it and sometimes not. He advised us to cultivate our rhizomes with a search for meaningful relationships and a hearty appetite for healthy pleasures. Good advice!

Paying attention to nature teaches us that the processes of life and death coexist in organisms, ecosystems and habitats. This issue of *The Fringed Gentian*<sup>™</sup> delves into these processes and their importance for the Garden. If we were there today we would see a quiet winter scene behind the gates. With some effort we might see the woodchucks, the raptors and even the pileated woodpecker. In the wetland, frogs are sleeping under the mud until early spring. On dead-looking plants we could find fully developed buds awaiting their time to open into new leaves and flowers. Although it may be harder to see, the winter Garden is full of life and the promise of new life. We may not be able to walk the paths right now, but this issue of the *Gentian* will help bring us there in spirit.

Sincerely,  
J. Pam Weiner  
President



## President's Report Spring 2010



**And so we have spring...** that most welcome and inspiring quarter of our earthly year. In some mythologies, she is a nubile virgin full of vitality and fertile promise. For astronomers, spring is the equinoctial period between March 21 and the summer solstice, caused, like all four seasons, by the 23<sup>o</sup>-degree tilt of the Earth (with respect to its own axis) as it orbits the Sun, 93 million miles away.

For many of the Friends, spring is our favorite time in the Garden. To witness such an array of delightful blooms at the very beginning of the season . . . it's almost like having a fabulous dessert before a fine dinner. We see the swaths of white and yellow trout lilies with their delicately dappled leaves and the pastel palette of hepatica flowers. Then come the first trilliums and the tiny yellow flowers of the leatherwood tree, and we're off in search of the shooting stars. The birders among us are scanning and listening for the first warblers. Meanwhile we may be lucky to see the owlets and a fox kit or two.

While we are enjoying these treasures in the Garden, the Friends plan to accomplish a lot during the 2010 season. We are working to expand our volunteer corps, both in the Martha Crone Shelter and with the Friends Invasive Plants Action Group. These determined weed warriors, led by committee chair Jim Proctor, have been selected by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board to receive the Remarkable Volunteer Service Award for their hard work removing buckthorn and garlic mustard from the immediate buffer zone around the Garden.

I know you join me in saying "Congratulations and many thanks" to them for their most valuable service. For more information about volunteering, please look in these pages and visit our website.

Our Student Transportation Grant Program is another important part of the Friends work in 2010. This funding of buses and vans to bring urban students to the Garden for a meaningful experience in a natural environment is fully operational and available to even more school groups this year. Finally, we want to invite members to share impressions about our work on behalf of the Garden by joining us on Saturday, May 22 for our annual meeting at the Garden. Details are on our website at [www.friendsofthewildflowergarden.org](http://www.friendsofthewildflowergarden.org), or please call 612-377-3573.

Happy Spring!

J. Pam Weiner  
President



## President's Report Summer 2010



### Dear Friends,

I hope the enormous leak from the underwater BP oil well in the Gulf of Mexico has been sealed by the time you read this. It breaks my heart to think of the damage the spill has done to human, bird, sea and plant life! I wish that all I needed to worry about this summer is whether my insect repellent works, I get to the Dairy Queen a couple of times and am able to walk in the upland prairie Garden amid the wild monarda, bluestem and various sunflowers.

Is it wrong to focus on these pleasures when such tragic events occur? Or to think about familiar domains and smaller problems close to home? In early June I ferried two road-crossing turtles across Glenwood Avenue to the safety of the wetland, and Membership Chair Emily Anderson took an injured one to the wildlife rescue service at the Humane Society. We both felt good about this. The invasive plant problems in Wirth Park near the Garden challenge us a great deal, but at least we have some impact, some ability to reduce the severity of the situation.

But what about that horrendous oil spill or the frightening statistics on habitat loss for waterfowl and songbirds throughout North America? Rescuing a few turtles seems like such a small act, and we may never eradicate those damaging invasives; yet we want to do what we can. Pondering the parameters of global warming is important, but working on a new footbridge for the Garden is too—it provides us the blessing of understandable, accessible goals.

The Friends are engaged with several projects as the 2010 season unfolds. Most of them are immediate and concrete, and many have been created by the vision and energy of Friends members. The Student Transportation Grant, bringing hundreds of summer school enrollees to the Garden this season, is the brainchild of Gary Bebeau and Ann Godfrey. A new Plant Photo Guide for Shelter visitors, based on images from our website, is in development because of volunteer Jayne Funk.

Under the leadership of Jim Proctor and Ellen Lipschultz, the Friends Invasive Plants Action Group fights on against garlic mustard and buckthorn in the Garden's buffer zone. This beautiful newsletter is in our hands because of the work of editor Judy Remington and her team. Many dedicated people are contributing their ideas and efforts to support and protect the Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden and Bird Sanctuary as a unique garden preserve for learning and enrichment.

And while we are working on different aspects of this goal, let us also savor the pleasures of the season. We should practice the art of appreciation that is nurtured by our relationship with the Garden. The sensuous tone of summer almost requires that we slow down and pay attention to her languorous rhythm. And maybe that is nature's secret lesson, as well. In an 1856 journal entry, H. D. Thoreau instructed:

*Consider the turtle. A whole summer — June, July and August — is not too good nor too much to hatch a turtle in. Perchance you have worried yourself, despaired of the world, meditated the end of life, and all things seemed rushing to destruction; but nature has steadily and serenely advanced with a turtle's pace.*

Yours for a serene summer,

J. Pam Weiner  
President



## President's Report Autumn 2010



### Dear Friends,

All of us who treasure the Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden and Bird Sanctuary probably have felt inspired there at one time, or often. Perhaps you've thrilled to the sight of a hillside of perfect ferns or a pair of raptors flying above. The waves of color in the prairie on a windy August afternoon can surely stop us in our tracks, and I love the massive show of blooming turtlehead in late summer. How wonderful it is to enter the Garden and know that there is always something beautiful to discover!

Some people go beyond the sensory enjoyment and botanical or birding knowledge that the Garden offers. Artists are the special people who transform the beauty and wonder of the natural world into images, objects, poetry, music, dance and other media.

Artists have been drawn to nature as subject matter for as long as humans have been on earth. I think of cave paintings, pictographs and carvings by hunter-gatherers; illuminated manuscripts decorated with ornate flowers and mythic creatures; Japanese screen paintings of cranes and peony blossoms; Durer's amazing animal and bird etchings.

When Twain describes the Mississippi, are you not transported? Reading Melville, one can feel and fear the wildness of the sea. In Whitman's words, the vibrant portrayal of nature becomes hymn-like, rhapsodic. And today, lucky is the person who visits Giverny and then sits in the Orangerie reveling in Monet's Water Lilies, perhaps beginning to understand how an artist can bring such intense scenes into being based on his or her relationship with plants.

This issue of *The Fringed Gentian*<sup>TM</sup> features some of the artists of our own Garden, people who have pursued their creative endeavors inside the gates and shared their work with others. In the history of the Friends, there have been many practitioners, including poets Betty Bridgman and Lon Miller; and bird painter Harriet Betzold, forerunner of the Bird x Bird artists Jennifer Davis and Cynde Randall.





Our present master, Jim Proctor, maker of buckthorn art for as long as he has led our invasive efforts, has now expanded his oeuvre into the realm of exquisite miniatures fashioned from seeds, pods, and other plant materials. Gratitude and appreciation are due to all the talented and visionary people who lead us to see more deeply into nature through their art. In that spirit, let us welcome the season with a poet's song:

#### Autumn Day

*Lord, it is time. The summer was very big. Lay thy shadow on the sundials, and on the meadows let the winds go loose.*

*Command the last fruits that they shall be full; give them another two more southerly days, press them on to fulfillment and drive the last sweetness into the heavy wine.*

*Who has no house now, will build him one no more. Who is alone now, long will so remain will wake, read, write long letters and will in the avenues to and fro restlessly wander, when the leaves are blowing.*

—Rainer Maria Rilke —M. D. Herter Norton, trans.

Sincerely,

J. Pam Weiner  
President

**Photos above:** Top right - Pink Turtlehead ( *Chelone lyonii* Pursh.); middle right - American Cranberrybush (*Viburnum opulus* L. var. *americanum* Aiton. ); bottom right - "Cranes on the Seashore" by Ohara SHOSON, Japanese 1877-1945, photo ©Gary Bebeau

**Above:** Drawing by Harriet Betzold, ©2005

**Below:** The Prairie hillside with grasses and Indian Hemp

