

# A FLORILEGIUM GROWS IN THE GARDEN

By Meleah Maynard



*Sensitive fern by Linda Powers*



*Leadplant by Barbara Illingsworth*

Botanical art has been around for centuries. Immortalizing beloved everyday plants, as well as those that have vanished over time, the art form is practiced by artists all over the world, including those who are hard at work in the Garden.

Some visitors have probably already noticed students from the Minnesota School of Botanical Art ([www.minnesotaschoolofbotanicalart.com](http://www.minnesotaschoolofbotanicalart.com)) out in the Garden taking photos and sketching. Since 2010, they have been creating a florilegium of the Garden under the direction of Marilyn Garber, the school's founder, who describes a florilegium as "a fancy word for a group of drawings or illustrations of plants that grow in a particular place."

## MAKING HISTORY

Florilegiums date back to the 15th century, when explorers would take artists with them on their travels to record the flora and fauna. But there hadn't been much call for the practice until 2000, when the Brooklyn Botanic Garden and the Filoli Florilegium in Woodside, Calif., both launched their own florilegium projects. The Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden florilegium will be the third contemporary American florilegium to get underway.

Garber, who has been visiting the Garden since moving to Minnesota in 1969, had been looking for "the right place" to do a florilegium since she started her school of botanical art in 2001. She thought the Garden's beauty and history seemed perfect, but she wasn't quite decided—until one day, while walking the Garden's

paths, she lost her car keys. After looking everywhere, she went to the shelter to see if she could call a friend to bring out her extra set so she could get to work on time. "And one of your wonderful volunteers offered to take me to my house, get the keys and bring me back," she recalls. "I thought, 'These are nice people here. This is where the florilegium needs to be.'"



*Marsh marigold by Gerry Herriges*



*Viburnum by Betsy Cole*



*Blue flag iris by Shelley Bowman*

## PRESERVING A LEGACY

Garden Curator Susan Wilkins selected the 110 plants that will be included in the florilegium. Plants are representative of each part of the garden, and Wilkins also chose a few plants that were important to Eloise Butler. More than 50 of Garber's students are working on the project, which she expects will take six to eight years to complete. Much of the timing depends on Mother Nature.

"Our goal is to finish a painting in one year, but some can take two to three years to complete because the weather doesn't cooperate," she explains. If the plant doesn't bloom well or produce pods the way it usually does, we have to wait another year to paint those stages the plant normally goes through in order to document all of them." The need to preserve the legacy of the Garden, and the plants inside the gates, is a key motivator for Garber. She says: "I want this little jewel of a place to be remembered five hundred years from now."

So far, 33 paintings have been finished and accepted into the florilegium. Most will soon be on exhibit at the Longfellow House near Minnehaha Falls in Minneapolis, where the school is located. They can also be viewed online at: [http://www.minnesotaschoolofbotanicalart.com/Minnesota\\_School\\_of\\_Botanical\\_Art/Florilegium\\_Paintings.html](http://www.minnesotaschoolofbotanicalart.com/Minnesota_School_of_Botanical_Art/Florilegium_Paintings.html). Plans for a spring exhibition at Minneapolis' Central Library are in the works. ♦