

THE FRINGED GENTIAN™

A PUBLICATION OF FRIENDS OF THE WILD FLOWER GARDEN, INC.

Dear Friends,

Once again, I greet you in the waning days of winter as we anticipate the coming of that marvelous time, spring, a very special time at the Garden. Somehow, spring is thrilling year after year, even though we can estimate its timing and characteristics within a predictable range of days and degrees. Having lately spent more time in a moderate climate with much less annual variability, I have felt grateful for our Minnesota seasons, with their distinctive weather patterns, textures and colors. I believe this has attuned my senses to and enhanced my awareness of the power, diversity and beauty of the natural environment. Of course, our Garden could not exist anywhere else . . . and how fortunate we are that this place was chosen.

In mid-January, my favorite conservative, David Brooks, wrote a column in the *New York Times* titled “When Beauty Strikes,” in which he took sober stock of the contemporary focus on “post-humanist” cultural values such as metrics, analysis and materialism. He bemoaned the loss of a more aesthetic and meaningful emphasis on “the spiritual depths of emotion, symbol, myth and the inner life” that can elevate our experience of art and nature in a sustaining manner. He implied that we must be open to the opportunity for beauty because it “educates the emotions and connects us to the eternal.”

My mind went right to the Garden, a singularly powerful source of beauty in my life. And then I thought about the



The linnet that Wordsworth refers to never strays to the Western Hemisphere, but its relative the house finch is an occasional visitor to the Garden, and it, too, has a beautiful song

founder and how her devotion to what she called the “Wild Botanic Garden” was rooted in a deep attachment to nature and creation, much akin to the sensibilities and writing of the English romantic poets of the nineteenth century. Her favorite among them was William Wordsworth, who believed that our notions of beauty begin with Nature (which he capitalized) and our “nativity” into this world. He posited a kind of developmental process of an increasingly abstract relationship to Nature from childhood to maturity. In this excerpt from “The Tables Turned” he warns his reader to beware of passive learning and a focus away from the natural world:



*Books! 'tis a dull and endless strife:
Come, hear the woodland linnet,
How sweet his music! On my life,
There's more of wisdom in it.*

*And hark! How blithe the throstle sings!
He, too, is no mean preacher:
Come forth into the light of things,
Let Nature be your Teacher.*

*She has a world of ready wealth,
Our minds and hearts to bless—
Spontaneous wisdom breathed by health,
Truth breathed by cheerfulness.*

*One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach you more of man,
Of moral evil and of good,
Than all the sages can.*

This poem is the source of the quote over the Garden's front gate, for which there is a lovely Friends' remembrance. In 1990, the Friends funded the new front gate construction of stone and wood. When the time came to select the words to be placed over the gate, board member Betty Bryan recalled that many other phrases were put forth as a possible entrance sign. Then, Gardener Cary George spoke up and suggested the Wordsworth quote, recalling that Eloise was a Wordsworth fan and

(Continued on next page)

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he thought this spoke to her belief system. It was agreed that this phrase was a wonderful way to express her founding intent and to welcome visitors in to learn and enjoy.

While the poem and its harsh dichotomy may seem quite outdated, there is something here that still speaks to us. Might our care and deep regard for the Garden be giving us back a special gift in return, keeping us in touch with the primacy of Nature and its beauty? I know many of us feel something like this. Could the Garden help us be better able to avoid the spiritual and/or

philosophical dead zone of reductionist tendencies that Brooks referred to? I think Wordsworth and Eloise would say yes to these questions and I quite agree.

In closing, I wish you a wonderful spring full of beauty and meaning, and I hope to see you at the Garden. To see photos and read more about Eloise, the Garden and the Friends, please visit our website: www.friendsofthewildflowergarden.org.

Sincerely,

J Pam Weiner



Looking Back on Spring in the Garden

GARY BEBEAU

Seventy-five years ago, in the spring of 1941, Garden Curator Martha Crone noted in her diary that on March 30, snow and ice were everywhere. Ice had to be chipped away so the Garden's gate could be opened. May Day came with "beautiful weather," Crone noted, but by May 3 it was bitterly cold and the small stove in the office was going all day. On May 19, May Crone's diary entry read: "Heat unbearable (88 degrees), hottest so far."

Fifty years ago, in 1966, Garden Curator Ken Avery was elected President of the Friends. At his request, the Friends annual meeting was held in the Garden for the first time on May 21. Crone wrote this in *The Fringed Gentian*: "How anxiously we wait for spring and then it rushes past so swiftly. April is truly the dawn of the year. The lovely budding time is soon over, that atmosphere of promise; one must be alert to enjoy it fully."

Twenty-five years ago, in May of 1991, the Friends celebrated the Garden's new front gate, which was funded by the Friends. On that date, the gate did not yet have its wooden arbor, but the stone and ironwork were complete. Gardener Cary George noted that the mosquito hatch was the worst in 15 years. And his attempt to reestablish the pink, stemless Lady's slipper in the Garden was failing—as it had for Eloise Butler, Martha Crone, and Ken Avery—and he would attempt it no longer.

More details on this and other topics can be found in the history archive of the Friends website: www.friendsofthewildflowergarden.org.

Gary Bebeau is Treasurer, Memorials Chair and Website Coordinator for the Friends.



Martha Crone, 1951.

Photo courtesy Minnesota Historical Society

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Garden Curator's Letter

By Susan Wilkins



Spring is upon us once again and the gates of the Wildflower Garden have opened (or will shortly!) for another season of beauty, exploration and delight. This is a time of great anticipation and preparation as Garden staff work wholeheartedly to get ready for a new season of splendor and the enjoyment and learning that ensues. We know that you, and all of the other Wildflower Garden enthusiasts out there, are just as excited to get back out there this year. It's simply a wonderful time of year here for all lovers of wild plants and wild gardens.

This season, I am pleased that a new seasonal gardener position has been created at the Wildflower Garden funded by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board's general operations budget. The new staff member is expected to start in early April and will work full time from April to November each year, assisting me with the complex, delicate and time-intensive work of physically caring for this 15-acre, native plant-focused botanical garden. We are thrilled to have the additional support of a seasonal gardener. Along with the horticulture internship program that brings college-age students out into the Wildflower Garden to learn all about caring for our plant collections, this new position will significantly enhance our ongoing efforts to manage invasive plants and their weedy sidekicks. It will also help us continue to build and care for the Garden's dynamic and diverse collections of plants.

Also, we are also pleased to announce that Kirsten Grohovsky was hired as the Wildflower Garden Program Coordinator late last season. Kirsten is returning this year in that role to coordinate the Garden's special tours and youth programs, which have grown exponentially over the past eight years. She will also be assisting with a variety of administrative tasks.

Another exciting development at the Wildflower Garden this year is that staff naturalists will be leading nature-focused programs in the regional parks of Minneapolis from April to October. Wildflower Garden staff naturalists have the knowledge and passion to inspire and inform park patrons system-wide, and this season they'll have a chance to share these gifts with even more people in different parts of the city. Look for information

about the Minneapolis Regional Park tours coming up in the seasonal Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden program booklet. Booklets are available in the spring, summer and fall in the Garden at the Shelter and online at www.minneapolis-parks.org/ebwg. Registration information for the tours, and all Wildflower Garden programs, is also available at the Shelter and online.

And, of course, all of the great offerings we have at the Wildflower Garden will be available this season as well, including a wide array of free public tours offered on weekends throughout the day and on weekday evenings; special programs like the full moon walks, new moon walks, and nature tots classes; and new natural history displays, touch-and-see items and children's crafts in the Shelter each month. As always, you'll also find naturalists and volunteers on duty in the Shelter and on the trails to answer questions and share in your explorations of this urban jewel of a garden.

We are looking forward to seeing you and yours out and about at the Wildflower Garden this season. Enjoy every step along the way!



Dutchman's breeches



The Garden Gate

By John Toren

Arriving at the Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden on a spring morning, perhaps for the first time in months, is an annual pleasure. I get a thrill just seeing the Garden gate. I guess the enclosure mostly serves to keep out the creatures that might do harm to the delicate plants inside, but it also delineates some sort of enchanted domain. This is wildness, but with a difference. The metal door of the gate creaks as you open it, and it clangs heavily as it closes behind you—if you're careless enough to let it swing free.

You're inside. You immediately see the little cottage sitting in the woods just down the hill. It's probably everyone's ideal of the little house in the deep woods, former home to young Abe Lincoln, Laura Ingalls Wilder or Henry David Thoreau. The path winds in shadow, but light filters down through the nascent leaf-cover, and perhaps you can see sunlight at the bottom of the hill, where the trees give way to marshy vegetation.

One or another spring ephemeral is probably in bloom—hepatica, bloodroot, trillium—depending on how far advanced the season is. They have their day, delicate and hopeful, and we're eager to greet them once again. But as the painter and sometime gardener

Robert Dash once put it, “I am predelicted toward shape, mass, and form, and have learned that the predominant color of all gardens is green.”

I usually follow the right-hand path along the base of the eastern slope. I look up the hillside hoping to see the fox den that was abandoned years ago, and then settle onto a bench, where, motionless, I become more attentive to my own thoughts, and also to movement out in the garden.

If luck is with me, I might look up and see a phoebe—the first phoebe of the season—perched on a branch well out in the boggy flat. He'll flick his tail a few times and then fly off, but perhaps circle back to the same branch, as flycatchers tend to do. The first phoebe! This is a momentous event, though the phoebe itself is not an exciting bird. Smallish, gray on top, white on the bottom, and a little darker gray in the head, it can be easily identified at some distance by its tail bobbing.

You might expect that a bird carrying such a poetic name would have at least one ethereal or moon-like quality. Not so. Not even the song. The bird that makes the sweet lyrical call of “phee-bee” is the chickadee. The phoebe's own call is a low guttural rasp, a comical two-note “pheel-behh” reminiscent of the hoarse cry of a vaudeville barker. Yet because it returns to the north early, and because it's a passerine, the sight of a phoebe convinces us that a flood of beautiful birds will soon be filling the woods with song.

Spring is a time for greeting new life and feeling the warm sun on your skin as a cool breeze blows through your hair. In the

Wildflower Garden, you never know what's going to be peeking through, from skunk cabbage to wild asparagus to marsh marigolds. Meanwhile, I often see plants I simply can't identify. Are they weeds, new arrivals, or cherished rarities?

Gardens have springs, fountains, shade, peace, pleasant scents, and colorful accents. Relaxing at our ease, it's difficult to resist the thought that this is what life ought to be like *all* the time. The relationship between reason and wildness we find in a garden is an abiding reality that accompanies us, taunts us, delights us, and challenges us, whether we're wandering an upland pasture or out in the bosom of wilderness itself. We bring an element of civility to the wilderness simply by being in it. By the same token, there is no drawing room, garden, or church in the world, however refined, that doesn't have an element of *wildness* to it, simply because we are there.

The comedian Jerry Seinfeld once observed sagely that the pleasure we take in driving around in cars can be attributed to the fact that we're inside and outside, moving and stationary, all at the same time. It might similarly be pointed out that when we're in a garden, we're in the midst of wildness that has been somewhat tamed, tailored, and beautified by human effort. This is true of the Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden, too, though the plants of interest are mostly natives rather than cultivars. We're clearly outside, yet protected by an enclosure of sorts, thus bringing another set of evident contradictions to life. Wild vs. tame—inside vs. outside.

Philosophers have been struggling for centuries to establish a hierarchy amid these interfaces. It can't be done. Everything raw and open and beautiful in life erupts from the midst of this cauldron of confusion. In fact, it may be that we feel "grounded" in life only to the degree that we can feel the tussle taking place within us, and have some idea of the direction we want to take it.

John Toren is the Fringed Gentian's graphic designer.



photo: David Brisance





Friends Invasive Plant Action Group

Writing this in late January, after our severe dip into minus-too-far degrees, it's not easy to imagine what May and June will feel like. But by then the Garden will be in full swing—and so will the Friends Invasive Plant Action Group (FIPAG) volunteers, as it will be prime garlic mustard removal time!

Previously, our group has removed invasive plants primarily in relatively obscure areas along the fence line outside the Garden. In 2016, our focus will be on the more public, and showy, maple glen area just south of the Garden (on your right as you walk down the main path to the Garden's entrance).

For many years, the view into the glen has been completely blocked by a towering buckthorn hedge running along one side of the path. But, recently, contractors with the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board have begun removing the largest buckthorn, and FIPAG volunteers have started hand-clearing smaller buckthorn and garlic mustard. Check it out. The glen is interesting anytime, and it's truly spectacular in the fall when the maples turn.

If you'd like to volunteer, here is the 2016 garlic mustard-pulling schedule:

Saturday, May 7, 2:00 - 4:30 p.m.

Sunday, May 15th, 2:00 - 4:30 p.m.

Sunday, May 22, 2:00 - 4:30 p.m.

Saturday, June 4, 10:00 - 12:30 p.m.

Sunday, June 12, 2:00 - 4:30 p.m.

Details and handouts will be in the Shelter and online in the Volunteering section of the Friend's website (<http://www.friendsofthewildflowergarden.org/pages/volunteer.html>). You can also sign up at invasives@friendsofeloisebutler.org to be notified of upcoming events.

Please join us for the first time—or again—this year. It's a great way to ensure you carve out time to be in the woods.

As always, thanks to all who participate in and support our activities. We look forward to seeing you again this year.

— Jim Proctor & Liz Anderson,
Invasive Plant Action Group co-chairs



Friends Annual Membership Meeting



The 2016 Annual Membership Meeting of the Friends of the Wild Flower Garden will be held on Sunday, June 5 at 3:00 p.m. in the community room of the Kenwood Park Center, 2101 West Franklin Avenue, Minneapolis (around the corner from the school entrance). All members and interested others are welcome to attend and enjoy light refreshments while hearing about what's happening with the Garden and Friends' programs.

Shelter Volunteer Update

Greetings from Lauren Husting, Shelter Volunteer Coordinator. Just a reminder, we are always in need of Shelter docents to greet Garden visitors. No need to be an expert naturalist. If you are interested in volunteering at the Shelter, please contact me at ebwghsheltervolunteers@gmail.com.

—Lauren Husting, Shelter Volunteer Coordinator

Memorials and Donations ~ october 2015 / january 2016

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Michael Welch

Memorials and gifts to the Friends are much appreciated and constitute an important part of keeping the Garden a special place for generations of people to enjoy. In 2015, undesignated gifts are being used for the Cary George Wetland Project. Project update information is on the Friends website.

Note: Memorials and gifts are tax deductible. When sending a memorial, please give the name and address of the family being honored so that we can acknowledge that a memorial has been received. An acknowledgment will be provided to all donors. Memorials and gifts should be sent to: Treasurer, Friends of the Wild Flower Garden, P. O. Box 3793, Minneapolis, MN 55403. Checks are payable to Friends of the Wild Flower Garden or donate on our website: www.friendsofthewildflowergarden.org

MEMORIALS RECEIVED

For Bennett Lowry Busselman from Nancy and Gary Busselman
For Ann Downer from Marcia Marshall
For William E. Fisher Jr. from John and Joan Haldeman

— New Members —

Rich Baker and Becky Anderson, Golden Valley
Carolyn Carr, Minneapolis
Jerrold Gershone, Minnetonka
Dean Gulstad, Maple Grove
Renate Hiller, Golden Valley
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Marijane Tessman, Brooklyn Center



Membership Form

☐ Individual \$15 ☐ Family \$25 ☐ Sponsor \$100 ☐ Life \$500 ☐ Other \$ _____

Memberships can be ordered online at
www.friendsofthewildflowergarden.org
or mailed with a check payable to:

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Membership
P.O. Box 3793
Minneapolis, MN 55403-0793

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*Thank you for helping to sustain the Eloise Butler
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THE FRINGED GENTIAN

Friends of the Wild Flower Garden, Inc.
P.O. Box 3793
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www.friendsofthewildflowergarden.org

The Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden and Bird Sanctuary comprises cultivated but naturalistic woodland, wetland and prairie environments, 2/3 mile of mulch-covered pathways and a rustic shelter where educational programming and materials can be found. It is the oldest public wildflower garden in the United States. The 15-acre site is located within the city of Minneapolis and is owned and operated by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. The Garden is open from April 1 through October 15 from 7:30 A.M. to a half-hour before sunset.

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Photo: John Toren

Bloodroot flowers just opening in the midst of a bed of *vinca minor*.

The Friends of the Wild Flower Garden, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) Minnesota nonprofit corporation, formed in 1952. Its purpose is to educate by enhancing Garden visitors' appreciation and understanding of Minnesota's native plants and natural environments and to offer assistance for the Garden in the form of funding and other support.

The Fringed Gentian is published for members and supporters of the Friends.

For changes to your mailing address, please write Membership Coordinator Jayne Funk at: members@friendsofeloisebutler.org or Membership, Friends of the Wild Flower Garden, P.O. Box 3793, Mpls., MN 55403.

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100% post-consumer waste paper.*