



Garden Curator Notes - Winter 2009-2010

by Susan Wilkins



Common Buckthorn

Winter is a wonderful time to reflect on the activities of the passing year and to plan for the coming growing season. Always near the forefront of planning activities for the Wildflower Garden are matters related to management of the native plant collections. To care for the health of the Wildflower Garden's native plants, a focus on removal of troublesome plants is inherent. Weed management at the Wildflower Garden is a dynamic and evolving practice, part science and part art. Deciding which plants will go and which will stay is a process that requires a continuous interaction with what is unfolding in the plant collections.



Ohio Buckeye Seed Capsules

Non-native Invasive Species

There are four broad categories of undesirable plants at the Wildflower Garden, and they fall along a spectrum. The first, and most unwanted, are the non-native invasive species with which many of us are quite familiar. Buckthorn, [garlic mustard](#) and Japanese knotweed are all invasive plants that have a mind of their own and can, in a matter of years, run rampant throughout a garden area if afforded the chance. Our goal is to eradicate the non-native invasives.

Non-native Aggressive Species

The second group is made up of non-native plants that aren't going to completely take over a given garden area in a brief time period but will aggressively spread and eventually negatively impact the plant collections. These plants can move into non-edge zones of the Wildflower Garden, and their impact will be felt and seen over time. Our goal for this group, which includes such plant species as [moneywort](#), periwinkle and [Ohio buckeye](#), is to limit them to manageable populations near trails for display and educational purposes.



Moneywort

Non-native Weeds

Then there are the common non-native weeds that prefer disturbed habitats, typically along trail edges and newly tilled soil or areas where extensive weeding and invasive species removal has occurred. The weeds in this third group won't compete well with most established plants; their spread is limited to disturbed sites and edge areas found in the Wildflower Garden. These familiar weeds of home landscapes include [European bellflower](#), common dandelion and [red clover](#). Our goal is to limit this group to manageable populations near trails for display and educational purposes.



European Bellflower

Native Weeds

Finally, there are the aggressive native plants. In the Wildflower Garden, there are a handful of plant species that, although native, tend to be vigorous growers, to a fault. These plants typically spread by rhizomes or seed and





Red Clover

over time can be just as damaging to the diversity of the plant collections as some of the non-native aggressive plants. Good examples of plants in this fourth category include early goldenrod, [jewelweed](#) and prairie cordgrass. Again, our goal is to limit this group to manageable populations near trails for display and educational purposes.

Several different control methods are used to manage invasive species at the Wildflower Garden. If multiple control methods work for a given species, staff members will choose the least harmful and most effective approach. Sometimes control involves the use of more than one method for a given species over time. These control methods include manual removal, use of direct high-heat flame, controlled burns, biocontrol and herbicides.



Spotted Jewelweed

All invasive and weed species are dealt with on a case by case basis, as no two are exactly alike. Generally, the more aggressive a given plant species is, the more immediate the need for its removal.

Decisions about which plants will go and how they will be removed or controlled is an ongoing process—one that requires a dynamic and responsive management approach.

As published in *The Fringed Gentian*™, Winter 2009-2010, Vol. 58 #1.



Garden Curator Notes - Spring 2010

by Susan Wilkins

A sample of spring wildflowers



Marsh Marigold



American Plum



Blue Cohosh

Another winter is passing and in its tracks has revealed spring's bright presence. Underneath the layers of compacted leaves, dried grasses and last year's faded flower stalks lies the promise of new growth and renewal. Day by day, small changes appear in the landscape. A green shoot emerges here, a kinglet calls there. Soon enough the world is a sea of life being lived again, and the wheels of the spring season carry us wholeheartedly out of winter's grasp. This time of year I often reflect on how quickly one can forget winter's starkness once spring's song sings itself over the landscape.

And where better, in the midst of an urban expanse, to experience the miracle of spring's return than in the Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden and Bird Sanctuary?

April and May are delightful months at the Garden, showcasing woodland wildflowers in full splendor. Visit often to see the many different species of spring ephemerals and native wildflowers blossom and fruit. Bring your binoculars (or borrow ours) to get a better glimpse of the myriad migratory songbirds passing through before they head north toward their summer breeding grounds. Walk quietly on the trails and you may be lucky enough to spot a fox, mink or groundhog at play or at work.

Several new special programs are available this spring and early summer for young people and adults. These will complement and broaden existing programs, public tours and learning opportunities. New adult programs include Watercolors–Painting Nature; Gardening with Wildflowers; and Plant Families 101.

For young people, a new homeschool program has been developed and will be piloted this season. This is in addition to the great programming already in place for schoolchildren, youth groups and scouts.

Also new this year is an artist's residency program with Joel Pieper, local painter and art educator. Joel will be painting in the Garden for four days in the spring and teaching a program in June called the Power of Observation. Please visit the Garden's webpage at www.minneapolisparcs.org for updated information

As published in *The Fringed Gentian*[™], Spring 2010, Vol. 58 #2.



Garden Curator Notes - Summer 2010

by Susan Wilkins

Volunteer Work in the Garden



Volunteers removing [Garlic Mustard](#).



Susan Wilkins and Jim Proctor working on removing a young [Buckthorn](#)



The Volunteer Desk inside the [Martha Crone Shelter](#).

We had a tremendous amount of volunteer-based people power fueling our work at the Garden this past spring. More than 100 individuals lent a hand during the spring months in the field and at the Martha Crone Visitor Shelter. Volunteers were involved in a variety of ways, all working toward making this public resource a treasure trove of native plant beauty and a place to find inspiration from and information about the natural world.

Volunteers who work in the field contribute to the efforts to keep the native plant collections in and around the Garden healthy and ecologically vibrant. Those who volunteer in the Visitor Shelter staff the building and educate the Garden's many visitors about the wonders of this special place. Between April 1 and June 4, more than 1,100 hours had been donated by volunteers in a variety of capacities at and around the Garden. Here is a breakdown:

Field-based weeding and planting efforts

- Legacy Volunteers weeding in assigned plots = 70.5 hours
- Friends' Invasive Plants Action Group weeding events with community volunteers and also a special event with the Aveda Corporation = 106 hours
- May Program high school volunteers from Breck School weeding and planting = 504 hours
- Special group weeding and planting events with General Mills, Optum Health and Americorp = 93 hours

Education and staffing of the Visitor Shelter

Visitor Shelter Volunteers = 330.5 hours

The community of Garden volunteers is a vital thread in the web of life at the Garden. Garden staff members and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board are so thankful for all of the efforts made by the volunteers of the Garden and the Friends of the Wild Flower Garden.

For more information about the various volunteer programs and opportunities at the Wildflower Garden contact Garden Curator Susan Wilkins at 612-282-2286 or visit the Friends website at www.friendsofeloisebutler.org.

Susan Wilkins is Curator of the Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden and Bird Sanctuary and is an employee of The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB). The MPRB website address is <http://www.minneapolisparcs.org>



Garden Curator Notes - Autumn 2010

by Susan Wilkins

The Melding of Art and Nature at the Wildflower Garden

For many years now, staff members have been developing arts-based programming and partnerships at the Wildflower Garden to assist people in their exploration of the natural world. The inclusion of specialized art classes into our programming began in 2005, and offerings have expanded since that time. In 2004, a partnership with Bird x Bird was formed, which has benefited the Garden in many ways ever since.

The reason behind our efforts to introduce arts-based programs and projects into the Garden's palette of offerings is simple. When people can see the natural world through a different lens — say that of a painter, photographer or poet — a new perspective or insight can be born.

Through artistic expression rooted in observation of the natural world, artists can share their experiences with others and provide a different angle, a fresh iteration of a plant or bird or landscape. This is meaningful work, provoking self and others to look and look again at the natural world. Many wonderful new and familiar arts-based programs and events have unfolded as part of this year's Garden season. In addition, a new arts-based partnership has been created. Here is a brief overview of the highlights.

In February 2010, the 8th annual Bird x Bird auction took place at the Northrup King Building, located in the Northeast Minneapolis Arts District. More than 130 artists created works of art inspired by nature, the phenology notes of the Wildflower Garden and bird banding records of the Audubon Center of the Northwoods. Hundreds of people attend the event each year to view and purchase the art works. Proceeds from the auction benefit the Wildflower Garden and the Audubon Center.

In May 2010, the artist residency program was introduced. Selected as resident of the year, painter Joel Pieper spent several weekend days painting in the Wildflower Garden. Visitors could learn more about plein air (in the open air) painting from Joel while watching him work. Joel also had several works on display in the Visitors Shelter during May and June.



Resident Artist Joel Pieper working in the Garden. Photo by Phoebe Waugh.

We look forward to bringing the residency program to new heights in future years. We offered several arts-based classes for adults, including two new watercolor classes taught by Sandy Muzzy and "The Power of Observation" led by Joel Pieper. Also offered were classes on wildflower photography, botanical illustration and several different poetry themes. Finally, a partnership with the Minnesota School for

Botanical Art (MSBA) has been developing over the past many months which will result in a truly remarkable creation—the development of a florilegium for the Wildflower Garden.

A florilegium is a collection of artwork depicting plants at a specific location, in this case the Wildflower Garden. The project will document many plant species to provide a visual historical record of the Wildflower Garden's flora. Beginning this fall, current and former MSBA students and teachers will be invited to create original paintings of Wildflower Garden plants. The paintings will be traditional botanical artworks presenting a scientifically accurate image of each chosen plant. The project will continue for several years. Paintings accepted into the florilegium will be donated to the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board for display and for use in providing educational programs and services to the community.

The Garden has inspired many individuals and groups to explore the natural world as artists or because of the endeavors of artists. As the arts-based programs and partnerships continue to grow and evolve at the Garden, so will the depth and beauty of our collective appreciation of our amazing botanic garden.

Susan Wilkins is Curator of the Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden and Bird Sanctuary and is an employee of The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB). The MPRB website address is <http://www.minneapolisparcs.org>

©2010 Friends of the Wild Flower Garden, Inc. This article was published in the Friends newsletter *The Fringed Gentian*™ Autumn 2010, Vol. 58 #4