



Garden Curator's Letter

By Susan Wilkins



Every spring, what feels like a miracle occurs. The days begin to warm and lengthen. We find ourselves

dropping layers—mittens, scarves and heavy coats—and stepping out to feel the caress of sunlight on bare skin. When only weeks ago we traveled to and fro with our busy lives cloaked in winter's dark blanket, now the soft evening light or early morning's glimmer guides us into our gardens to discover what is emerging from awakened soil. A hint of green under decayed leaves—delight! A flower found in full bloom—pure joy! Tree buds bursting in vibrant hues above our heads—unstoppable! As our planet tilts and spins so steadily along, rested earth gives way to another season of refreshed potential and irrepressible growth. We have arrived and spring is singing.

This season marks the 108th year of the Wildflower Garden's existence. And each year, the importance of botanic gardens like this one grows. Within the Garden's 15 acres, over 500 species of plants (primarily natives) are nurtured and more than 130 species of migratory and resident birds find refuge for a little, or a long, while.

Thanks to a recent two-year study led by entomologists Elaine Evans and Joel Gardner, and funded jointly by the Friends of the Wild Flower Garden and the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, we now know that at least 104 bee species call the Wildflower Garden home. Gardens that focus on fostering

biodiversity and healthy habitats for a wide variety of plant and animal life are quickly becoming more significant refuges for species that are feeling the pushes and pulls of the modern world. Botanic gardens worldwide are working diligently to conserve and understand the richness of plant life—and, often, insect, bird and other animal life, too.

As we set out into our gardens this season, at home and also as visitors and volunteers at botanic gardens like the Wildflower Garden, we can take great pleasure in knowing that we are part of a wonderful community of stewards spanning the globe. As communities and individuals focus on conserving natural areas, enhancing green spaces, creating habitat and bringing more of nature into neighborhoods, cities and farms, all of our lives are the better for it. Our collective efforts are truly something to celebrate. Happy gardening, everyone, and happy Garden visiting this spring!

And be sure to stay connected to all of the wonderful programs, classes, and special events occurring at the Garden this season. There is too much to list here, but please visit the Garden's Facebook page for up-to-date information. You can also receive periodic emails about Wildflower Garden happenings and news by joining the Wildflower Garden's email list. Simply go to www.minneapolis-parks.org and click on the red envelope. Enter your email address and select the Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden from the Things to Do menu.



Above – Virginia bluebells (Photo: Meleah Maynard); Top Right – Interrupted fern (Photo: Don Beimborn); Bottom Right – Showy lady's slipper (Photo: Sher Stoneman)