

THE FRINGED GENTIAN

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



DEAR FRIENDS,

I dare say this is a most truly welcome spring for all of us in Minnesota. Having spent about half the winter in warmer climes, I hereby raise my metaphorical glass of tribute to all of you who endured and indeed overcame, perhaps even flourishing masterfully, through the many days of bitter cold and more snow, as well as shudderingly low wind chills. Like you, I thought about the birds, raptors and animals, hoping they would survive the harsh winter and live to see another spring.

I even thought about the plants. Of course, we Garden fans often think about the plants. Will all of the ephemerals reappear after a hard winter? Will high or low extremes of snow cover affect them adversely? And, this year, will the Garden's ash trees be spared the emerald ash borer due to the severe cold?

Do you ever wonder, though, if plants suffer or actually experience environmental stressors that beings with consciousness do? The concept of plant neurobiology, explored in depth by Michael Pollan in an article entitled, *The Intelligent Plant*, in the last December issue of *The New Yorker*, is a source of conflict among plant biologists and ethologists because it implies that plants have brains with neurons and "intelligence." Scientists do, however, agree that plants have extensive sensory capacities in their roots, as well as communication functions measurable by chemical and electrical changes. The debate is sure to continue, and more research on the lives and capacities of plants will animate our ideas about ecology, biodiversity and the challenge of invasives.

But let's get back to the domain of our own dear Garden of amazing plants, and the Friends' plans for 2014. First, I can report that definite progress has been made in the planning and design of the section of the Garden boardwalk project honoring Cary George, the Garden's fourth Gardener. Highlights of the design include an adjustable floating foundation system specifically made specifically for the wetland's soggy conditions, as well as several modest boardwalk amenities where some seating and gathering space will be added. The deck surface will be local ash that has been

heat treated for durability. The Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board has initiated the bidding process for installation of Phase I, and we now expect fulfillment by late summer or early fall. The Friends have contributed \$25,000 to the project so far. And we have been approached by People for Parks, offering to match up to another \$12,500, if we can raise some additional funds this year. Ongoing updates will be posted on our website and in the next *Gentian*, as well.

I am delighted to announce that we have a new Shelter Volunteer Coordinator for 2014. Lauren Husting has volunteered in the Shelter for several years and has been mentored and tutored by Melissa Hansen to take over this essential role. We welcome her gratefully and look forward to her presence on the Board. I am equally pleased to report that Melissa will continue as a director. She plans to focus her energy and creativity on membership growth and community outreach. Thank you, Melissa, for all of your excellent work!

Looking further ahead in the season, we are planning another Garden Party fundraiser to replenish the Student Transportation Grant monies, so that we can continue to pay for buses bringing students to the Garden for nature classes. At our first Garden party, in July 2012, attendees enjoyed Garden tours, a silent auction, refreshments and music. Once again we will gather in the beautifully remodeled Wirth Pavilion on Sunday August 3—Eloise Butler's birthday—from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. Please mark your calendar and plan to join us for a fun time and a good cause.

In closing, allow me to share one tiny tidbit from the Pollan piece in *The New Yorker*: "Plants dominate every terrestrial environment, composing 99 percent of the biomass on Earth." Perhaps we are in touch with their immense importance as we tend to our very special 15-acre plot. Happy spring!

Sincerely,
J Pam Weiner

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DEAR FRIENDS,

From the very beginning of her efforts to create “the Wild Botanic Garden,” it’s clear Eloise Butler was focused on the wetland.

A particular reason for selecting this place was the undrained tamarack swamp, such a swamp being the abode of most of our orchids and insectivorous plants so interesting in habit and structure. Indeed, most lovers of wild plants are bog-trotters and find in the depths of a swamp an earthly paradise. The indigenous flora was found to be captivating. Among the notables were sundew, pitcher plant, Linnaea, Turk’s-cap lily, the two species of fringed gentian, and the showy and yellow lady’s-slippers.

Source: *The Wild Gardener: The Life and Selected Writings of Eloise Butler* by Martha E. Hellander.

As we welcome summer, we celebrate the glories of the wetland, sharing Eloise’s appreciation for some of the same bog plants, along with the forget-me-nots, spotted jewelweed, water horsetail and wild calla lilies.

Beautiful dragonflies and the heavenly indigo bunting may also linger there for the added pleasure of the bog-trotters. But today there is a serious problem in the Garden’s wetland. The paths are often impassably wet, muddy and slippery. Visitors will sometimes walk off the trail to find drier footing, endangering fragile plant communities adjacent to the path. Some days, Curator Susan must close the wetland path to visitors entirely, due to these conditions. This deprives all of us, of course, but it is especially sad when there are youth groups and summer school students who miss out during the peak summer weeks.

And so we come again to the urgent need for the new bridge and boardwalk installation in this, the heart of the Garden. The northern bridge portion is what the Friends call the Cary George Wetland Project, as it will be dedicated in honor of our fourth Gardener. You may have already received a letter from the Board with an appeal for your financial support for this critical Garden infrastructure. We especially encourage you to visit our website www.friendsofthewildflowergarden.org to see the Cary George Wetland Project video with photos and illustrations of the design for the boardwalk system. You will also find an explanation of the current matching grant from People for Parks and updates on the project. Please help make this well-designed, durable and attractive Garden feature a reality in 2014.

In August, two wonderful events will take place for Garden Friends and lovers of native plants. Our Summer Garden Party to replenish the Student Transportation Fund and celebrate Eloise Butler’s 163rd birthday will take place on August 3 from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. in the renovated Wirth Park Pavilion. Also, the Florilegium display of Garden plants will open at the Minneapolis Central Library with a reception on August 14. You will find more details on both gatherings in this issue of the Gentian and on our website. Please do join us to share in the pleasures of summer and support these worthy Garden programs.

That’s all for now from this bog-trotter. Have a wonderful summer!

Sincerely,

J Pam Weiner

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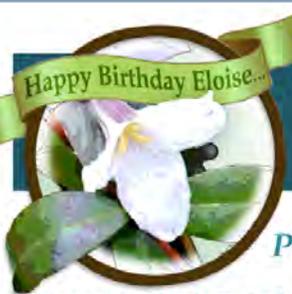
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FRIENDS OF THE WILD FLOWER GARDEN

GARDEN PARTY

Please join us August 3, 3:00 - 6:00 p.m.
at **WIRTH PARK PAVILION**
~Above Glenwood Avenue and the Wirth Lake Beach area

Bring a new friend to the Garden & expand our network of support!

Tickets for the event are \$20 at the door, or available on our website friendsofthewildflowergarden.org at a cost of \$20 for the first, \$15 for each additional ticket. All ticket costs are tax deductible.

Garden Tours Refreshments Family Entertainment

Silent Auction

of items reflecting the spirit and history of the Garden and the Friends

This year the Friends of the Wild Flower Garden are celebrating summer and Eloise Butler's 163rd birthday with a special event to replenish our Student Transportation Grant Program.

This program brings students from Minneapolis-area schools to the Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden and Bird Sanctuary for nature and science based programs. Hundreds of young people have benefited from this program in the past four years; its success has depleted the fund, and we are committed to providing this service into the future.

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Dear Friends,

As I write on this first day of October, we have just had the big shift from balmy, sunny 80-degree days to cool, wet autumn. Walking in the Garden today in a light rain, I admired the glistening green and yellow leaves of the woodland, mostly still on the trees. Stepping around small puddles on the wood-chipped path, I inhaled a fresh earthy smell followed by the aroma of wood burning in the Shelter’s fireplace. The zigzag goldenrod by the path to the back door was bright yellow, reminding me of the riot of color that remains vibrant in the upland Garden.

At the feeder, I saw a pair of cardinals, a downy woodpecker the ever-present chickadees and two chipmunks below, stuffing their cheeks with fallen seed. As always, I was thankful to be there to experience the simple pleasures of our “Wild Garden,” knowing that in a few weeks the 2014 season will be over along with such lovely walks.

The Friends have had a good year in many ways. Our fundraising efforts for the Cary George Wetland Project (also known as the Boardwalk project) were very successful with hearty support from many of you, including a few very magnanimous contributions of several thousands of dollars. Please accept our thanks for your generous assistance. Happily, we were able to fulfill the match challenge from People for Parks, so with their \$12,500, we can now provide \$50,000 for the project, in addition to our original donation of \$25,000.

Unfortunately, the installation will not take place this fall, as planned. When the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board’s planning staff put out the public bid in August, only one contractor responded, and their bid amount was exceedingly high.



Photo: Wes Nigieren

Baby snapping turtle.

Staff and the design team have told us that this was due to a weather-related, shortened construction season and that they will recommence the bid process in early winter when they expect a much more reasonable response. Of course, all of us on the Board are very anxious to see this project accomplished, but we are also determined to see it done prudently, with appropriate use of donated funds. Please check our website for updates over the winter.

Our August events were enjoyable successes. The Garden Party fundraiser for the Student Transportation Grant was held on a beautiful Sunday afternoon, and Eloise herself was there to guide Garden visitors and cut her birthday cake. The youngsters who came enjoyed the face painting, and the Garden tours and silent auction were entertaining for the adults. Later in the month, we were pleased to co-host the well-attended opening of the Eloise Butler Wildflower Garden’s Florilegium exhibit at the Minneapolis Central Library. The impressive display of artworks was much admired by all. Many people who came learned about the Garden for the first time—always a welcome bonus.

Lastly, I am proud to share with you that our volunteer programs are strong and providing wonderful value to the Garden and its visitors. We have added new volunteers to both the Shelter program and the Friends Invasive Plant Action Group’s garlic mustard and buckthorn warrior crews. Photos of our Annual Volunteer Appreciation Event on October 26 can be found on the back page of this issue. We cherish the opportunity to honor all Garden volunteers and to spend a pleasant evening together at season’s end.

I hope you had a last lovely walk in the Garden before the gates were locked for the year. Soon I will be imagining those magical strolls of early spring and looking forward to another year of grateful enjoyment in our special Garden.

Sincerely,
J Pam Weiner