

The Friends of the Wild Flower Garden



Words from our Founder Clinton M. Odell

When spring comes over the hill to melt the heavy snow in the woodlands of the Eloise Butler Wild Flower Garden in Theodore Wirth Park, the first flower to appear is the Snow Trillium (*Trillium nivale*). This brave little relative of the well-known large flowered trillium, blossoms while the last snow drifts are melting. It is followed closely by the interesting, but not very beautiful bloom of the Skunk Cabbage (*Symplocarpus foetidus*). And so the steady march of the spring, summer and autumn flower procession starts. An almost completely new show is staged every fortnight.

More than 1,000 wild flowers take part in this most instructive and delightful parade.

Like Caesar's Gaul, all of the wild flower garden is divided into three parts: The wooded area, the swamp, and the upland sunny section. Thus a potential habitat is provided for every wild flower that can be made to grow in Minnesota.

There are several wild flower gardens in the U.S. I doubt if any of them has the terrain to provide such complete coverage. It is our goal to create the finest wild flower establishment in the USA.

The Minneapolis Park Board and its efficient superintendent, Charles E. Doell, fully realize the possibilities of the garden, and have established a watering system, gravel paths and other improvements. However much remains to be done and to supplement the Park Board's efforts, we have started Friends of the Wild Flower Garden, Inc. This non-profit corporation has a perpetual charter. None of its officers can draw any salary, or derive any pecuniary benefit from its operation. Its annual dues range from \$3 to \$500. Many of our business and professional leaders, also a number from outside our city, have taken up memberships.



Skunk Cabbage (*Symplocarpus foetidus*)



[Martha Crone](#), curator of the garden, is the secretary, and editor of *The Fringed Gentian*[™], its official publication. Mrs. Crone is a talented writer, thoroughly versed in the culture of wild flowers. *The Fringed Gentian*[™] with each number having a carefully selected quotation from Thoreau's Journal, is a delightful publication.

Tame flower gardens are beautiful, but mostly all alike. Our wild flower garden, with no tame flowers admitted, is strange and wholly different. It is a source of unending interest to nature

enthusiasts and children. Thousands visit it each year.

Who can doubt the value of this garden to our city?

Odell used this essay (without the photos which we have added) in soliciting support and membership for the Friends, principally from his acquaintances in the business community. The Friends published this essay in *The Fringed Gentian*[™] Winter 2002, Vol. 50 #1

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Clinton Odell photo, courtesy Odell family.