

The Quarterly Journal of the Friends of the Garden

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'Life is a festival only to the wise.'
— Ralph Waldo Emerson

A new statue of a familiar face is unveiled at the Close Gardens (see page 8). At left, center, Master Gardener Christine Chiu, chair of the French 'Potager' Garden. At top, kids at Japanese Fall Festival. At top, two fiddlers at the Gray-Campbell Farmstead Lifestyle Exhibition.

Botanical Center begins to emerge for real

Construction of complex will become huge economic asset

At first, it may have been a fantasy. But then it became a dream, and a plan. For now, the Botanical Center is a gaping hole, a work in progress, but a year from now the yearning will be 12,700 square feet of magnificent reality.

And of course it comes at the best of times — that is, a locally funded job-producing stimulus package of a kind that makes gardeners giddy and visitors who perhaps did not quite grasp the vision back in 2006 acknowledge, 'Ahaaa, I get it!'

R.E. Smith Construction is the contractor for the center, designed by H Design of Springfield. The building should be complete in about one year. If you are so inclined, you can even watch [work in progress](#), thanks to the efforts of the Springfield/Greene County Parks and MU Extension staffs.

The main entrance will actually be on the rooftop of the LEED-certified green building, overlooking the vista that slopes gently down to Anne Drummond Lake. Meeting and exhibition spaces, wet classrooms, a gift shop and offices for the MU Extension Service, on-site parks personnel, Friends of the Garden and other organizations are included.

"The opportunities for special events in the Botanical Center really are spectacular," says George Deatz, president of Friends of the



What began as a fantasy is now under construction, soon to be the 12,700 square-foot Botanical Center overlooking the hillside vista leading to Anne Drummond Lake.

Garden. "What remains is for us to reach the goal of 1,000 or more members by the time the center opens, to work with other organizations who have an interest in offering events and activities. Our next goal is to create an endowment to manage and maintain the gardens."

Not to be overlooked is the potential for building partnerships, not only with the University of Missouri Extension Service, but also with other educational institutions, such as Ozarks Technical College, which already has a nationally accredited landscaping and lawn management program.

VISIT FOG
ONLINE
CLICK HERE

What a T-shirt:

Page 2: Volunteer three times, and receive an, incredibly bright FOG Volunteer T-shirt to make you the envy of others.



'Potager Garden'

Page 3: Master Gardeners combine the art of design with a disciplined passion for growing a serious kitchen garden.



Around & about the Gardens

President George Deatz wants you to be a member

If you are reading this, you are either a member of Friends of the Garden – or you should be!

If you are a member, you receive tangible benefits such as a free pass to the Mizumoto Japanese Stroll Garden for two people for the season and our informative newsletters.



George Deatz

However, the real benefit is intangible: You become part of the growing movement to assist with the development and enjoyment of Nathanael Greene/Close Memorial Gardens and Park, which includes the numerous surrounding gardens, butterfly house, and arboretum, plus the new Botanical Center building now under construction.

If you are not a member, you should be. The minimal \$25 investment you make with your membership dues, plus any donations and volunteer time you might contribute, will help us grow and maintain the gardens. Of course, as a member you can explore the paths for exercise while enjoying the serene beauty of the gardens, attend our annual events, increase your knowledge and know you helped make all of this possible. Our goal is to reach a membership level of at least 1,000 members by the time the new Botanical Center celebrates its grand opening in about a year.

Won't you become one of us? Please send in your application today, found on page 7.

Whatever your talents, share them

One of the benefits of membership in FOG is the opportunity to put your skills to work, no matter what they may be. And of course, part of the adventure is learning new skills. In fact, we need volunteers in many areas, from marketing and grant-writing to graphic design – and yes, pulling weeds.

FOG members who volunteer at least three times will receive a FOG volunteer T-shirt with our sincere appreciation, whatever you do.

As they say on those TV infomercials, these aren't available in any store. But they are available to people like you, willing to earn them by making a difference as a FOG volunteer (at least three times). We think you might just have the time of your life. To volunteer, contact us by e-mail at news@friendsofthegarden.org.

Volunteer
Friends of the Garden.org

A 'sacred obligation' motivates Dr. Bill Roston to nurture butterflies

By SCOTT CUNNINGHAM

Although I'm a new member of Friends of the Garden, I have known about "Doc" for many years. In my past life, I was a sales rep that called on many area physician offices including Dr. Bill Roston. I was always fascinated by all of his avocations ... arrowhead collections, hostas ... leading to Garden of Dreams ... thousands of slides of his underwater photography, his playful banter with his office manager, his wife, Judy ... and his willingness to see every patient that came through his office door before he went home.

When most of us struggle with one job and/or a hobby or two, few of us feel "obligated" to help others. Whether it's helping at a food pantry, building a habitat home, picking up trash in our community, building/maintaining a greenways trail, or just maybe being a part of the development and maintenance of one of the most beautiful garden areas in the Midwest.

One such man, Dr. Bill Roston, has given thousands of hours to help develop this crown jewel of parks in the Ozarks. At an age when most of us would be content with taking a nap in the rocker on our front porch, Dr. Roston continues to bring beauty and wonder of a new kind to the amazing gardens at Close Memorial Park, part of Nathaniel Greene Park located just off Scenic between Battlefield and Sunshine in Springfield, Missouri.

Thanks to Dr. Roston and many others, we now have a butterfly house that may just be the best opportunity to see the life cycles of butterflies and moths native to Missouri.

I have had the pleasure to spend a few hours watching Dr. Roston explain this process to hundreds of children of all ages. All seeming to have that child-like fascination of observing this amazing part of nature. Day after day, night after night, he sits patiently waiting for the next opportunity to enlighten us about such a wonderful world.

I recently asked him what motivates him to keep giving so much of himself. His response was... "I feel obligated ...".

May we all feel "obligated" ... every day, every month, every year of our lives, to help make our world a better place.

Thank you Dr. and Mrs. (Judy) Roston for all that you have and will do to make our world a better place.

Scott Cunningham is a member of Friends of the Garden. He routinely peddles his bicycle to the gardens as a volunteer.



For the love of tennis: Jodie Adams honored with USTA President's Award

Springfield-Greene County Park Board Director Jodie Adams was recently awarded the 2009 United States Tennis Association's President's Award at USTA meetings during the US Open in New York City.

The President's Award annually honors an individual who has given unusual and extraordinary service to the sport of tennis in the public interest. Since its inception in 1999, this award's recipients have included Billie Jean King, Lindsay Davenport, Mike Bryan and Bob Bryan.



Jodie Adams

Jodie chairs the USTA board's efforts to develop a partnership with the National Park and Recreation Association for a "Tennis In the Parks" (TIP) program. She is the outgoing president of NRPA and a moving force in both organizations.

The 10-year partnership is a strategic initiative designed to improve opportunities in local communities for the public to learn and play the lifelong game of tennis. The program focuses on quality tennis programming, facility development, maintenance, and advocacy. Since 2005, the USTA has contributed more than \$4.8 million in matching facility grants to 150 agencies that built or renovated 1,107 courts as part of the TIP program. That is part of more than \$44.2 million in public tennis facility renovations or construction.

Adams' accomplishments include:

- ✿ Serving on USTA National Committees for more than 25 years. Winning the 2007 USTA/NPPTA Hollis Smith Lifetime Achievement Award.
- ✿ Serving on the Springfield Sports Commission and Hall of Fame Boards.
- ✿ Serving on the board of the Missouri and Springfield Sports Halls of Fame.
- ✿ Winning more than 400 Junior and Adult Tennis Tournament titles over the past 40 years (undefeated four years at Parkview High School; played NCAA Division I Tennis for Missouri State University and USTA Pro Circuits).

In 2009, Springfield was recognized as a USTA Top 10 Best Tennis City and the Springfield Lasers World Team Tennis franchise won the WTT Western Conference and advanced to the WTT Championships. In 1984, the USTA Facility Award was awarded to Gillenwaters Tennis Complex, and in 2008, Cooper Tennis Complex was named a Top 50 Tennis Welcome Center. Springfield was just awarded a USTA Championship – the National Public Parks Championships for 2013.

Master Gardeners combine art and science in French 'potager' masterpiece



Master Gardeners not only plant garlic, they include it in magical dishes to be shared with volunteers at a recent work session. At right, missing heads, the irksome aftermath of cabbage patch thievery.

At left, FOG's Bob and Barbara Kipfer share a portion of their garlic crop for fall replanting.

Becoming a Master Gardener: Volunteerism

Summer is officially over and meandering into the wonderful days of autumn, but there's still time to visit the Master Gardeners' French "Potager" Gardens just inside the entrance to Nathaniel Greene/Close Memorial Park. Summer crops are giving way to ripening fall produce that will be donated to feed those who need our helping hands.

There you will discover what can happen when gardens and art merge at ground level. For those who don't converse in French, a "potager" garden is a kitchen garden, a place where beauty and bounty become one. For years, the demonstration gardens stuck to a traditional American theme, vegetables planted in rows for easier mechanical cultivation, as many of us do in our backyard sanctuaries.

About two dozen volunteers led by Christine Chiu, soon to be a FOG board member, decided it was time to try something new. That is to say, something several hundred years old by custom in France.

"It seemed time for a change, in order to inspire, educate and motivate all who see the garden to try something different in their own gardens," says Chiu, a graphic designer with a design degree from Missouri State University. "Vegetable gardens don't have to be boring; they can be alluring and engaging. We've had reports that people have already changed the design of their garden after seeing this one. And several more have built raised beds this spring because they saw the Square Foot Garden."

First, of course, came the design, circular in shape (above, at top) with room for vegetables, herbs, fruit and flowers — truly a "feast for the senses."

* * * *

Master Gardener classes are offered each year beginning in late January. If you are interested, contact the University Extension Center in your county. In Greene County, contact Patrick Byers, Horticulture Specialist, University of Missouri Extension; 833 Boonville Avenue. Springfield, MO 65802. Phone 862-9284, Ext .17,



FOG Blog growing as source for news and views

FriendsOfTheGarden.org, is becoming a popular destination on the Internet, thanks to the tag-team efforts of Mimi Aumann, Lee Coates, George Deatz, George Freeman, Peter Longley, Frank Shipe, Sam Webber and others. Our prolific president has even taken his **Garden Blog** to The Springfield News-Leader web site, where you are likely to see his postings more often than just about anyone.

The FOG Blog is great place to keep up with gardening news. You will also find links to other blogs and web sites.

If you're wondering what blogging is all about, read the commentary by FOG member and artist Mimi Aumann on Page 5. Mimi, by the way, deserves her place in the Guinness Book of World Records for her world record collection of "dung" papers, which are much finer than the name quite correctly implies. The only hitch is that the Guinness people want to be paid for the scoop. Here's its free.

Bloggers are like the guy who wasn't born in the Ozarks, but came here as soon as he heard about it. FOGers know a good thing when we hear about it, and we hope you might read and contribute useful information. Just try to be brief. You might even become a pundit, a prognosticator or a soothsayer. Just don't be a prevaricator.

FOG board meetings offer insights as well as action

Attending FOG board meetings may not seem like fun, but we're working to at least make them "edu-taining." In September, for example, MU horticulturist Patrick Byers offered a brief program on the history of apples. It was outstanding, and one day Patrick will return.

In October, we will hear Ben Kellner on his visit to Longwood Gardens near the National Recreation and Parks Association offices at Ashburn, Va. While we conduct official business at FOG board meetings, we try to keep it short.

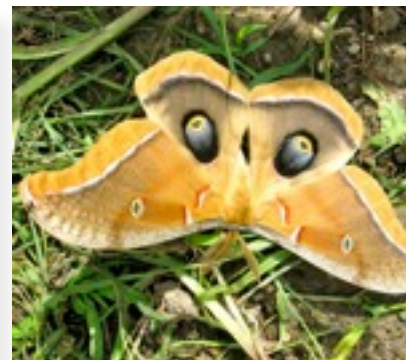
Friends of the Garden meetings are at 5 p.m. on the second Thursday of each month at the Chesterfield Family Center, 2511 W. Republic Road. Members and guests are welcome.



Patrick Byers



Ben Kellner



The festivals may be over, but the memories remain in our digital cameras and on our hard drives for years to come. At top left, Lee Coates and Foxy, the unofficial mascot at Peggy's Flowers, mind their booth at the Japanese Fall Festival. At top right, a seeming forlorn *Antheraea polyphemus* moth in the now closed Butterfly House. Below left is a wind-powered turbine fan marketed by GladeWinds of Springfield, and below right, Dr. Stan Horsch and volunteers rebuild a bed in The White Garden.

By any name, 'ladybugs' do heavenly duty in the garden

In the Ozarks and elsewhere, ladybugs have the well-deserved reputation of being a gardener's friend. Still, some of us may not realize why.

Actually, "ladybug" is used to identify a number of species in the **Coccinellidae** family. Most have rounded bodies and an easily spotted Halloween-like orange and black backsides. Some have orange with black spots, black stripes or even blotches, or even black with orange spots. Probably the most common species is the **Hippodamia convergens**, but you'll find other species lurking about your flower and vegetable gardens.

A magnified view will show large, toothy mandibles, making ladybugs the highly effective nemesis of aphids, mealy bugs, scale insects and other undesirable insect pests.

Just one adult ladybug can consume 60 aphids daily. In spring and summer, ladybugs produce clusters of eggs. The larvae also feed on aphids – one ladybug larva may devour up to 25 aphids per day. Yummy, if you're a ladybug offspring.

Ladybugs acquired their names in Medieval times when these tiny beetles were considered to be divinely sent to help farmers rid their crops of pests, and thus became associated with the Virgin Mary, commonly referred to as "Our Lady."

With no nest, ladybugs simply hang out wherever aphids and other preying insect



Ladybugs of an uncertain species hang out on milkweed pods, one of many varieties in the Ozarks who devour hard-shelled garden pests, such as aphids.

populations are high, including gardens and the canopies of trees. With cooler fall temperatures they sometimes gather in huge swarms. The multicolored Asian lady beetle (a species of ladybug introduced for pest-control purposes) has made headlines by entering homes through cracks around doors and windows or attic vents.

Don't panic, even if you find Ladybugs in large numbers, as they pose no threat to plants, pets or humans. In fact, killing them can stain carpeting or drapes. Come spring, you'll like having ladybugs around, particularly if you're a gardener.

As for Japanese beetles, stay tuned and stay vigilant, and hope for good news.

You can learn more about insects at www.missouriconservation.org.

Welcome to these new and renewing members*

Norman L. Abrams
Teresa Allen*
Michelle Atkinson*
Daisy & George Ballard*
Margaret Banta*
Christ & Debra Barnhart*
Jana Belk*
Eleanor L. Bennett
Ruth & Jason Bisby
Eva Blackshear*
Terry Bloodworth*
Mary Ann Bolli*
Sabrina Bonnette*
Remedios Borja*
Maxine & Lyndle G. Bossing*
Joan Bowen*
Julia Boyce*
Martha Brabson
Barbara J. Brown*
Bill & Jeanne Buckner
Anise Butler*
Helen Mariel Caldwell*
Noelle Christine Callaway
Tracy Christensen & Kevin Burgess*
Debra & Stephen Collins*
Judy & Dwaine Crigger*
J Scott Cunningham*
Debbie Cushin*
Ron & Mary Davidson*
William Densham
Bonnie & Donald Eggerman*
Ralph Eichholz
Sharon & Steve Foreman*

George & Nancy Freeman
Friends of Nathanael Greene,
Federation Garden Clubs
of Missouri*
Robin & Brenda Funkhouser*
Sam & Jo Gardner
Cliff Garland
Anna Gintz*
Della & Paul Goodwin*
Harry & Joyce Guttroff*
James & Christie Hall*
William Hardman*
Sharon R. Harper
Rich & Sherry Haynes*
Stan & Wilma Horsch
Herschel Hubbard
Dave & Tammy Jahnke*
Ronald & Mary Jane Jones
Buck Keagy*
Diane Keeter
Barbara & Robert Kipfer
Kelly & Louise Knauer*
Peggy Day Lee*
Jim & Sarah Lewis*
Steve & Susan Lindenberg*
Dr Richard & Faye Loeb
Emily May Logan*
Sandra Jo Lowther
Andrew & Stacey Luehrs*
Jerry & Vivian Lumpe
Sam McGowan
Duane & Marilyn Meyer
Cindy Million

Keith & Joyce Nobel*
Jerry O'Quinn
Sharon & Kenneth Owings*
Gordon & Tina Powell*
Rebecca Rast*
Roger C. & Zina Ratzlaff*
Janette Reichert
Bill Roberts*
Elizabeth Sammon*
Carolyn Schirmer*
Sue Schuble*
Clark & Karen Selby
Mike Shade*
Bob Shaw
Dr. Craig Shifrin*
Linda Siler
Patsy Spindle*
Loretta Stogsdill
Faye Sturhahn*
Bill & Carol Teal*
Deborah Thompson*
Josette & Mike Tilley*
Terry Ann Touhey*
Vicky Trippe*
Amy Tuggle*
Constance & Vincent Tyndall*
Margie VonDerHeide
James Watts
David & Glena Welde*
James & Judy Wenzl*
Dow & Linda Whiting
Wild Birds Unlimited*

Gee Williams
John & Cynthia Willis
Rebecca & Matt Pracal Woodard*
Virginia Woods
Robert & Patty Workman
John & Beverly Young

Memberships in Memory

Maria Baeres
Martin & Cheryl Boyer
John & Rita Chiodini
Joseph Daniels
Mary Hinkl
Maureen McCourt
Dean & Denise McFarland
Kevin Menne
Missouri Trout Fishermen's Assoc.
Gary & Kay Moss
Bruce & Kare Pegram
Sandy & John Pegram
Ronald & Jeanette Politte
Robert & Jean Ryan
Sanda & Joe Schelsky
SW MO Fly Fishers
George & Carole Wilson

Important Note: If you have not yet sent your new membership application or renewal for 2009, please do so using the form on page 7. Friends of the Gardens strives to serve you and expand and maintain our gardens. Please address any member questions to news@friendsofthegarden.org.

*Since the summer 2009 newsletter

The FOG Blog is like a plant; it must be fed to thrive

By MIMIAUMANN

In contemplating this question, I went out on line to see what definitions I could find. To narrow it down: a blog can be a personal diary; a daily pulpit; a collaborative space; a political soapbox; a breaking-news outlet; a collection of links; memos to the world...

Yes, the blogosphere is the entire world of blogs – you can speak to the entire world through your blog. And a blog can be whatever you want it to be.

In simple terms, a blog is a web site where you write stuff on an ongoing basis. New stuff shows up at the top so your visitors to the blog can read what's new – and then they can also access the archives to see what has gone on before. When a blog has interesting and informative information that appeals to a wide range of folks, it will continue to be visited



Mimi Aumann

on a regular basis. You will even have comments from time to time that will indicate particular interest in various blog postings... And a counter automatically keeps up with the number of visitors to the site.

Nothing is as likely to lose a reader as a blog that is not maintained, with fresh news posted consistently. In my own experience, I have found a really good blog and started to visit regularly – and then it just stops for days, weeks, sometimes months before some little item is placed there. Needless to say, I no longer take my limited time to visit that kind of blog.

We don't want that to ever happen to the opportunity we have through The FOG Blog to speak to the general public about our plans, our progress, our concerns, our needs, our excitement in welcoming them to the jewel we have created for them... So the blog has to be tended – like our gardens. It sort of reminds me of the play, *The Little Shop of Horrors*! Remember the giant plant that always needed to be fed? Feed me, feed me, feed me.... I can just hear our blog calling...

Now, let us talk of our responsibility as individual FOG members in getting our message across through this wonderful vehicle for growth. This is one of many opportunities to be a part of the efforts to promote FOG and what we are accomplishing in our quest to become more visible, not only in our own community – but out in the blogosphere as well. We have such devoted and committed and hard-working volunteers in our membership. But not everyone is able to put in the sweat equity required to keep such gardens going and growing. A very easy and simple way to help in our growth of membership is through the FOG blog – no sweat required. It is much more interesting when many different voices are saying the same wonderful things about what is taking place out at Nathanael Greene Park/Close Memorial Gardens. Don't you have something to say?

Mimi Aumann is an artist living in the Branson area who works with paper made by hand with plant fibers. She is also a member of FOG, and a frequent contributor to [The FOG Blog](#).

Garden Notes & other good stuff

Numbers help tell the story of gardens

One way to measure public awareness of the gardens to look at the numbers. For example, Friends of the Garden is now more than 300 members, a 40 percent increase above a year ago. That's great progress, but our goal is to reach 1,000 members by this time next year when The Botanical Center opens. All the more reason we hope you will send along this newsletter by e-mail to a dozen or so of your closest garden-friendly acquaintances. More if you like.

Here are some other numbers that help measure the increasing popularity of the gardens.

12,000 visitors to the new Bill Roston Butterfly House.

4,500 visitors during the Butterfly Festival weekend.

9,500 paying visitors to the Fall Festival in the Japanese Stroll Gardens.

400 visitors during Bluegrass & Blossoms Concert.

560 visitors to the FOG table at Insect-O-Rama at The Nature Center on Aug. 21. Visitors to our table learned about the life cycle of the butterfly and the Butterfly House; Friends of the Garden; Close Park and the new Butterfly House.

\$1,000 Reward Fund aims at deterring vandalism, thefts

Visitors to the incredible French Potager Gardens created by Master Gardeners or other gardens will notice something new. Eight signs are now in place offering up to \$500 for the arrest and conviction of anyone committing theft or vandalism.

The Reward Fund is a joint effort by Friends of the Garden and Master

Gardens, and still needs donations to achieve our goal of being budget neutral.

Thanks to Christine Chiu, a graphics designer who chairs the Demonstration Gardens Committee for Master Gardeners and the Springfield/Greene County Parks Board for printing and displaying the signs.



Signs alone will not solve the problem until someone with the courage to speak up comes forward to help apprehend those who would abuse the parks. Tipsters need not be identified to earn a reward. Tips can be made at www.tipsubmit.com or by calling Crimestoppers at 869-TIPS.



Peter Longley with his steadfast canine companion, Orbit, a Great Pyrenees, whose own story is just waiting to be told. Peter serves as both designer and caretaker of the English Garden, among others.

Q&A

Question: How can I help FOG reach its goal of 1,000 members? Do you have a Speakers' Bureau?

Yes, you can, and we do. A FOG member will speak to your group about the gardens. We're available with a colorful computer presentation and information.

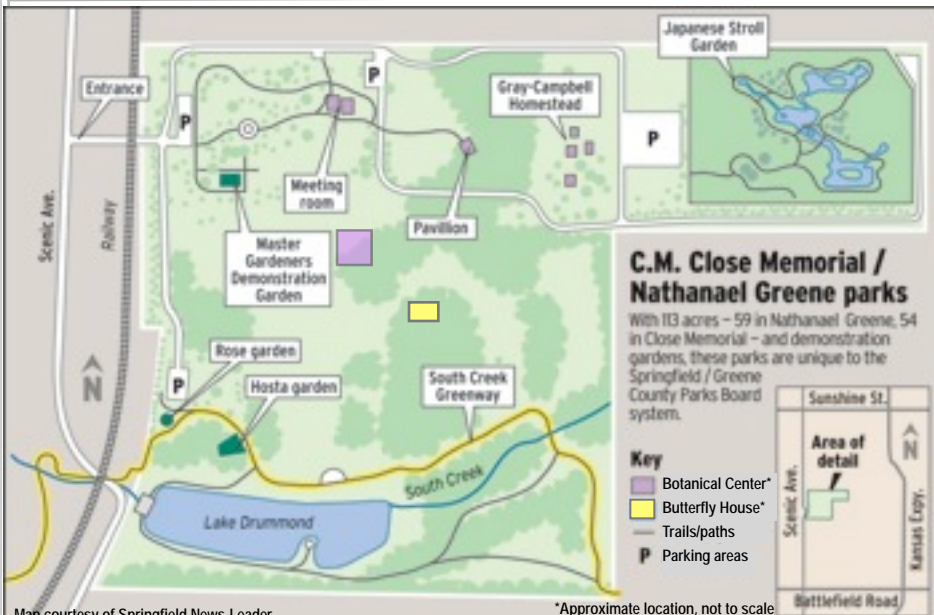
You can help tell story of the gardens and the new Botanical Center. Ask your social network at work, school, church, work if they've heard of the gardens. Tell them about the free season pass for two to the Mizumoto Japanese Stroll Gardens for two; admission is normally \$3 per visit. You can share the online version of this newsletter (including a handy map at left and membership application on Page 7), by e-mail.

Question: As a member, what must I do to keep my membership active other than pay my dues?

The short answer is nothing, and you don't have to be a gardener to join FOG. Although members do volunteer to work in the gardens. — and we always need more — Others volunteer to write articles, attend meetings in the community telling our story or serve on our Board of Directors. But if you do no more than tell a friend about our organization to help us expand our membership, that's great.

That said, work sessions in the garden are an opportunity for exercise while at the same time enjoying the plants and nature around you. A few very special members work nearly every day.

Let us answer your question. Send them to news@friendsofthegarden.org. You can also join FOG using the form on Page 7.



Map courtesy of Springfield News-Leader

*Approximate location, not to scale

JEFF HAMPER / NEWS-LEADER



Support Friends of the Garden: Become a member

Your interest in being a member of a Friends of the Garden is the first step to make a lasting difference in developing The Botanical Center and Gardens at Nathanael Greene/Close Memorial Park in Springfield, Mo.

Purpose of Membership

Friends of the Garden Inc., is a non-profit organization, that supports the development, construction and maintenance of The Botanical Gardens at Close Memorial Park.

Membership Benefits

Friends of the Garden believes that gardens enrich our lives and those of future generations by giving some back. Members receive the following:

- **Newsletters** about gardening programs, events and other other educational opportunities.
- **Free Seasonal Admission** to the Mizumoto Japanese Stroll Garden for you and one other person.
- **Special events**, including the Friends of the Garden Butterfly Festival and exhibitions, Bluegrass & Blossoms concert, educational and other benefits.
- **New friends** who share your gardening interest and make Springfield a more beautiful city to visit and call home.
- **Opportunities to volunteer** on projects from gardening to fund raising.

Membership levels:

- ☐ \$ 500 - Benefactor
- ☐ \$ 250 - Patron
- ☐ \$ 100 - Sponsor
- ☐ \$ 50 - Contributor
- ☐ \$ 25 - Friend
- ☐ \$ 25 - Gift Membership
- ☐ Other

Corporate Memberships

- ☐ \$ 150 - Bronze
- ☐ \$ 250 - Silver
- ☐ \$ 500 - Gold
- ☐ \$1,000 - Platinum

Please tell us about you:

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
CITY _____ ZIP CODE _____
STATE _____ PHONE _____
E-MAIL _____

Thank you!

Please indicate Annual Membership Type:

New ☐ Renewal ☐ Gift ☐

Please send your tax-deductible annual membership dues to:

Membership, c/o Friends of the Garden, Inc. P.O. Box 8566, Springfield, MO 65801

You or someone you know may wish to consider purchase memorial bricks for the Memorial Walk in the English White Garden, memorial trees for the garden or help finance a new garden as a memorial to someone you choose. (For more information, please contact our garden chairman, Bob Childress (417-838-9454). Oct. 1,2009 NL

Major Close and family celebrate birthday with sculpture unveiling

James Hall and Major Close are no strangers to one another's passions. Hall created the first sculpture in the Close Gardens, of Anne Drummond, Major's mother-in-law, who sits on a bench overlooking the lake that bears her name. Then came Hall's Butterfly Girl and other works, so that Major Close might not have been surprised to discover that his likeness has been created by Hall to mark Close's 79th birthday on Aug. 14, 2009.

But of course he was surprised by his likeness at the entrance to the Hosta Gardens overlooking the White Garden.

The second surprise was that dozens of family and friends gathered at the gardens on Sunday, Aug. 6, to share in the moment. Major's grandchildren assisted wife Marthe with the unveiling, and then quickly realized that the kneeling figure also offered a familiar knee.

The sculpture was a time gift that others will share for generations. But unless they know a bit about the man behind the Close Gardens, they will be missing a lesson in generosity, humility, persistence and patience.

Major is named for his father, Major Cephus Close, who was a successful poultry farmer with three farms around Springfield. In fact,

Major thought the sculptor was of his father until he read the name on the Australian bush hat that is his trademark head gear.

The likeness has Major on his hands and knees, holding a trowel, presumably in search of another pesky weed. Indeed, on his knees is where you will most often find him posing as "unskilled labor."

But if you engage Major Close in conversation, you will also find that he is a pugnacious visionary and a willing listener to the ideas of others who have joined in his passion to develop the 20 gardens already in place. Others credit him with sticking to his dream that the gardens be free and open to the public, and for a botanical center overlooking the vista. And you must be careful around Major, lest he recruit you to become not only his friend, but a Friend of the Garden. And you should, of course. On both counts.



At top, Major Close with his likeness, a bronze sculpture by James Hall of Nixa, near the entrance to the Hosta Gardens. Above, four generations of the Close family gather for a photo with the new statue. Above left, sculptor James Hall of Nixa wraps an arm around the object of his work.