



Excerpted from "Friends of the Garden – The First 15 Years" published in 2015.

“BUTTERFLIES ARE LIKE LOVE ...”

Dr. Bill Roston, a primary care physician in Forsyth, loves butterflies. Having started with FOG when he and Bob Childress convinced Major Close to put in hostas as the second garden, Roston can reel off the succession that followed — ornamental grasses, Asiatic lilies, Irises, a Butterfly Garden, daylilies, peonies ... azaleas, redbuds, dwarf conifers.

He started gardening when he was in second grade, back in Ohio. He was an apprentice for his brother who owned a nursery business in Ohio. From another brother, he learned landscaping and a third taught him bricklaying — an ideal combination for a future garden designer. Today, Roston also owns Garden of Dreams, an ethereal cave setting in Sparta, ideal for hostas, where brides meander down a lovely path toward their waiting grooms.

“I’ve loved butterflies ever since I was into gardening as a kid. I noticed that when I was a kid how many more butterflies were around and how few there were now compared to what they used to be.”

Roston visited butterfly houses on various travels, including one at Powell Gardens near Kansas City. The ones he saw featured tropical species. There was no such facility just for native butterflies anywhere in Missouri. So why not add one at the park, he reasoned.

The group raised about \$2,800 for the initial butterfly house, which opened in 2009. That first year Roston was snowed under by the popularity of the garden’s new feature; he closed his doctor’s office at 1 p.m. four days a week and spent from 2–8 p.m. at the Butterfly House talking with and teaching some 14,000 visitors who came through. Volunteer Scott Cunningham rode his bike from Nixa to cover Thursdays for him. A program was developed to train docents, and now MSU biology professor Chris Barnhart and his wife, Debra, are curating the Butterfly House. They used an online fundraising campaign to pay an intern for the 2015 season. In 2014, about 26,000 people visited the Dr. Bill Roston Native Butterfly House. The July Butterfly Festival is a major annual draw.

There are a lot of children that love it there,” he says. “I went in there one Sunday afternoon recently and there were about 15 young kids in there from about three to seven years old. And to me, this all makes it worthwhile. You can see in their faces the joy that they have when they go in there.”

In Their Own Words

Dr. Bill Roston

“I feel that work is a blessing. What would you do without work? I enjoy working; I enjoy accomplishing things. What you do for others makes you feel more worthwhile, too. When you build a garden and it’s finished and people start enjoying it, that’s part of it, you know. So, that’s one reason why I’ve hung in there and done as much as I can.”