



# FRIENDS OF THE GARDEN

*The First 15 Years*

BY LOUISE KNAUER · PHOTOGRAPHS BY AARON J SCOTT

## On the Cover

The *White Garden* was inspired by Major and Marthe Close's visit to the White "Room" at 1930s-era Sissinghurst Castle Garden in southeastern England. Major's favorite, the White Garden was the natural spot to install a bronze of him in his most familiar profile, kneeling, trowel in hand. It was a surprise from Marthe. "He has no horticultural knowledge, period. He just wanted to be there helping create it," she says. "He said unskilled labor was his specialty. And that's why his statue just has him down digging in the dirt because that's what he did. He'd flag down people as they walked through and offer to give them free lessons on how to pull weeds."

Below, Major and Marthe celebrate their 2015 birthdays, which are just two weeks apart.



# A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO THE Springfield Botanical Gardens

*"The Parks Department's original intention for Nathanael Greene Park was to create a 'garden park.' Early partnerships with garden clubs and civic groups paved the way for Friends of the Garden to grow this vision into an authentic botanical garden with the addition of Close Memorial Park. Local plant societies were engaged and our gardens came to life!"*

— KATIE STEINHOFF

SPRINGFIELD BOTANICAL CENTER COORDINATOR

## 1 Master Gardener Demonstration Gardens:

Learn about the perennials, annuals, shrubs, trees, vegetables, herbs and grasses that thrive in the Ozarks.

## 2 The Wildflower Garden:

Expanded to feature more sun- and shade-loving varieties.

## 3 The Redbud Garden:

Dedicated to the diversity in foliage, shape, size and flowers of one of Missouri's most beautiful flowering trees. Funded by the Federated Garden Clubs of Missouri.

## 4 The Dogwood Garden:

Pink or white blossoms are an early sign of Ozarks spring. Dedicated to Kay Cummins Finnie; funded in partnership with Tom Finnie.

## 5 The Native Shrub Garden:

Striking varieties show what is effective in residential gardens and landscapes.

## 6 The Heritage Garden:

Developing at the Gray-Campbell Farmstead site to feature

annuals, perennials, and vegetables grown in the 1860s.

## 7 The Dwarf Conifer Garden:

An extensive, terraced collection of cone-bearing evergreen shrubs enhanced by paths, a bridge, waterfall and rock outcroppings. Funded by Positronic Industries and the Gentry family.

## 8 The Sensory Garden:

In development in 2015 for special appeal to the physically and visually challenged. Near and dear to Bettine Clemen, who performed three fundraising concerts for it.

## 9 The Woodland Garden:

Azaleas, a redbud tree, groundcovers, and a rock wall planted with annuals provide continuous color in sun and shade.

## 10 Kickapoo Edge Prairie:

This native prairie garden of wildflowers and grasses regularly includes new species.

**11 Azalea Garden:** Nixa nursery owners Dow and Linda

Whiting donated plants for this site under a high-shade canopy; Ruth Arneson donated the hardscaping.

## 12 The Peony Garden:

Cherished for color and fragrance, these old and new varieties peak in May.

## 13 The Lily Garden:

Hundreds of Asiatic, Oriental and Trumpet lilies feature brilliant colors and unique fragrances.

## 14 The Columbine Garden:

These varieties are grouped by color and chosen to emphasize the plant's delicacy of bloom.

## 15 Federated Garden

**Club Gardens:** These colorful annuals and perennials are planted and maintained by the Brentwood Estates, Cherry Court and Ever Green Clubs and Hillbilly Gardeners.

## 16 Mizumoto Japanese Stroll

**Garden:** This 7.5-acre classic garden includes beautiful and serene winding paths, meditation and water



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gardens, a tea house, a moon bridge, a pagoda, and more.

**17 The Rose Garden:** The Park's first garden exhibits hybrid tea, grandiflora, floribunda, and shrub roses in raised beds ringed in stone.

**18 The Hosta Garden:** This nationally recognized garden planted and maintained by the Greater

Ozarks Hosta Society showcases the diversity of this popular perennial.

**19 The English Garden:** A classic stone wall, sundial, statue, and mix of spikes, mounds, and foliage provide quintessentially English color and form. Originally funded by Dr. Jordan Burkey.

**20 The White Garden:** This symphony of annuals,

perennials, and shrubs with blossoms all in white is maintained by members of the Pink Dogwood Garden Club.

**21 The Viburnum Garden:** Viburnums are stars for outstanding foliage, flowers, and berries, and some are also fragrant.

**22 Flowering Shrub Garden:** Lilacs, hydrangeas, weigela, and other beautiful flowering shrubs

provide visual interest even in winter.

**23 Ornamental Grass Garden:** Perennial and annual ornamental grasses show the many sizes, leaf colors, variegations, and blooms they bring to the landscape.

**24 The Daylily Garden:** Named a National Daylily Display Garden in 2012, more than 5,000 plants in 1,000 varieties create breathtaking colors and patterns.

**25 The Iris Garden:** Tall Bearded, Siberian, Japanese, and Louisiana types are most colorful in May and June.

**26 The Butterfly Garden:** Flowering beds and the plants inside the Dr. Bill Roston Native Butterfly House attract the popular winged insects.

**27 Peace Garden:** Developed and funded by Mariel Caldwell and Charles Collins in memory of Joan Collins, teacher, librarian, and peace activist, who headed the Peace Network of the Ozarks for many years.

**28 Blue Star Memorial Marker Garden:** The Springfield Council of Federated Garden Clubs of Missouri added a Blue Star Marker to honor our veterans.

**29 Founders Garden:** A "thank you" to the people who created the vision, designed the plans, and built the gardens at the Springfield-Greene County Botanical Center & Gardens.

**30 Ethnic Life Stories Trail of Trees:** A collection of 32 black gum trees honors immigrants to Springfield, 36 of whom are represented. Created and funded by Jim Mauldin and many participants.

**31 Winter Garden:** A truly four-season garden featuring attractive seedheads, fruit, exfoliating or colorful stems, evergreen foliage and plants that bloom early in spring.

**32 Mosaic Garden:** A large patio with a mosaic botanical and nature scene greets those using the South Creek Greenway Trail. Funded by Ruth Kelley and created by Christine Schilling.

**33 Native Caterpillar Café:** A full snack bar for common Missouri caterpillars. The Monarch Muncheonette offers a variety of milkweeds; the Vine Cellar hosts food for the Pipevine Swallowtail.

**34 Succulent Garden:** Fleshy leaved-plants with striking colors and shapes tolerate the hot and dry south side of the Botanical Center.

**35 Audubon Bubbler and native tapestry hedge:** Native plants known for hosting caterpillars and fruit production create a habitat especially for songbirds with food, water, shelter and a place to raise young.

**36 Daffodil drifts:** South of Lake Drummond, the woodland hillside glows golden in early spring with planted daffodils and spring ephemeral wildflowers like trillium and trout lily.

**37 The Botanical Center (seasonal color beds and MSU annual trials):** Cool season kales, cabbages, violas, tulips and daffodils are replaced with summer tropicals.

**38 Rain Garden:** Blue flag, sedges, hibiscus, swamp milkweed, Joe Pye weed and other native plants clean and filter Botanical Center water runoff.

**39 Magnolia Garden:** This collection of Magnolia trees is within the larger ornamental woodland development. Funded by George Deatz, Bob Childress and Avis Holloway.

*This history of the Friends of the Garden is dedicated to all of the volunteers, partners, donors, community groups, business sponsors and Parks staff members who have supported the vision of a botanical garden and park for Springfield, Greene County and all of Missouri.*

**Our Vision:** *Friends of the Garden unifies the Springfield Botanical Gardens and its Park Partners to bring people, nature and gardens together.*

**Our Mission:** *To inspire the discovery, understanding and appreciation of nature by creating and maintaining the Springfield Botanical Gardens and by supporting the mission of the Springfield-Greene County Botanical Center and Park Board.*

**Park Board Mission:** *The Springfield-Greene County Park Board is committed to provide the highest quality of leisure opportunities, to offer programs for relaxation as well as stimulation, and to encourage personal and community enrichment for the citizens of Springfield, Missouri.*





The Founders Garden at Close Memorial Park features 11 markers bearing the names of the key figures in the creation of Friends of the Garden, the group dedicated to the Springfield Botanical Gardens. These are their inscriptions.

### ANNETTE CLOSE PENNELL

*She and her brother donated the land.*

### MAJOR CLOSE

*Philanthropist/Visionary. He had the idea. Donated the land and found the right people to create these gardens—his dream.*

### DICK CARSON

*He was a native arboretum consultant.*

### BOB CHILDRESS

*Garden creator/leader. He took charge of every task and got things done right. The hardest working man in the gardens.*

*There they are, 11 names whose legacies* are now etched in stone for a garden's eternity in a place they all love. No wonder everyone was so happy on a fresh spring afternoon in May 2015 when the new Founders Garden was dedicated at Close Memorial Park. It had been 15 years since these 11 united to give Springfield a botanical park.

Among these friends of the garden on this day:

Don Akers was there. Initially tapped for his commercial real estate experience, he helped scout locations for the park that ended up in this lovely valley along South Creek, a tributary of the James River.

Dick Carson, the longtime Springfield nursery owner for whom gardening is both a vocation and an avocation, helped develop the impressive arboretum of native tree species. Working alongside other volunteers is a blessing, he told the group: "Love your neighbors and your life will go a lot better."

Dr. Bill Roston is credited as the garden's master designer and builder, particularly of its water features. The legacy of his "effervescent imagination" is Missouri's only Native Butterfly House and garden, the wildly successful educational experience where kids and adults can witness the full lifespan of our dwindling native species.

Dr. Stan Horsch served as the group's treasurer for many years. His true love, though, wasn't digging into the books, but into the ground. Credited as one of the hardest workers (high praise among this very hard-working crew), he "loved to plant and weed," his inscription reads.

Sitting next to Stan, just as he's worked alongside him for so many years, was Bob Childress, who is largely self taught from working his family's Ohio victory garden after World War II. The two-term FOG president's stone credits his leadership and ability to get things done right. Having had a hand in building all but three of the gardens, he describes himself as the "worker bee with the wheelbarrow."

And then, of course, there was Major Close. This park is his legacy to his parents. His drive. His vision. His ability to light the imaginations of fellow lovers of nature and his eagerness to equal every bit of the sweat equity he inspired in others.



*The Rose Garden was the first at the park, built by Sam McGowan.*

"I learned humility from these men," said Tom Lakowske, president of the Greater Ozarks Hosta Society, who conceived the Founders Garden because he didn't want this group to be forgotten in 100 years. "You never hear them say 'I did this'. You hear them say 'We did this!'"

### PREQUEL TO A PARK

In the mid-1970s, the Medical Center for Federal Prisoners in southwest Springfield decided to sell 59 surplus acres on the west side of its campus. The Springfield Parks Department wanted the land. But



*Dr. Bill Roston, Bob Childress, Major Close and Dr. Stan Horsch—the four men at the center of the gardens' creation—gather at the dedication of the Founders Garden on May 23, 2015.*

so did the American Legion Post and then-Southwest Missouri State University. SMSU *really* wanted it, in fact, pulling out the stops to lobby its case. The federal government chose the Parks Department in 1975. The new park was named for Major General Nathanael Greene, one of George Washington's most highly regarded Revolutionary War officers.

Conserving this large southwest parcel was a great opportunity for Parks, but there was no money to develop it, recalls retired Parks Director Dan Kinney. Bill Payne, then the department's landscape director, found some money here and there for projects like a koi pond. Parks fixed up a hog barn for a place to have meetings, and recycled lights taken off the Benton Avenue Viaduct to create a walking path. The real progress came when local clubs started getting involved, Kinney says.

The Lions Club built a trail for the vision-impaired and garden clubs assumed responsibility for their affinities.

"We had such a conglomeration of people—tree huggers, parks people, botanical people," Kinney says.

The park took a big leap forward when the Gray-Campbell Farmstead, Springfield's oldest homesite, was relocated there in 1984. The next year, the Japanese (now Mizumoto) Stroll Garden started cultivating its reputation as the city's premiere themed garden, its success rooted in Springfield's tight bond with its sister city, Isesaki, Japan.

About nine years later, in 1994, the University Extension Master Gardeners created its first Demonstration Garden, which was later re-worked and expanded considerably. That aspect of the park shouldn't

### **ANN WEBSTER**

*She was the first FOG president.*

### **LISA MCKAY**

*She provided legal expertise.*

### **DR. BILL ROSTON**

*Garden Designer/Builder. His specialty was water features. He designed and built the Dr. Bill Roston Butterfly House.*

### **PROFESSOR JAY GARROTT**

*He offered landscape expertise.*

### **DR. STAN HORSCH**

*Garden Builder/Worker. He loved to plant and weed. He was always ready to add new gardens and work hard.*

### **DON AKERS**

*He was a board member who led with wisdom.*

### **SAM MCGOWAN**

*He built the first garden—the Rose Garden.*



## IN THEIR OWN WORDS

### Bob Childress

*I have to force myself to sit down and enjoy it. I'm always seeing work that can be done. What I do like to do is take the golf cart and drive around and see what else we need to do.*

*I enjoy just watching people enjoy the gardens. I like seeing the kids and watching them get curious about the gardens, particularly the butterfly house.*

be underestimated, says George Deatz, a volunteer leader for several botanical groups. Today, the Demonstration Garden draws the most out-of-town visitors to learn about our native horticulture.

“You can see what the native plants of the state are, what vegetables will grow here, what herbs will grow here, what border plants you can plant around your yard, the turf. All of that is compliments of the Master Gardeners of Greene County,” Deatz says.

As Nathanael Greene’s evolution continued, Parks leaders had their eye on another plot of land between there and the American Legion Post. But there wasn’t any money to buy it. And it wasn’t for sale, anyway.

### IF THERE’S A WILL ...

Cephas Major Close II was a Texas A&M Aggie who made his living as a top salesman for Ralston Purina while he and his wife, Annie, raised daughter, Annette, and son, Cephas Major Close III. Close operated turkey farms on properties that have since become the Fox Grape and Highland Springs subdivisions. He then bought a farm in Willard where they raised thousands of turkeys. His flower garden wasn’t huge, but it was always special to him. Especially his roses.



Cephas Close

His son, known as Major, went off to Harvard University for an economics degree and then spent two years in the Navy. He came home to Springfield to work in the hatchery business with his dad and within a

year of meeting Marthe Drummond, they were married in 1957.

After the senior Close died in 1994, son Major fixed on the idea of creating a park to honor his parents. His sister, Annette, supported him as a semi-“silent partner” who stayed informed and provided financial support even though she spent most of her adult years living with her husband, Robin, and daughters Ruth Ann and Allison in Berkeley, Calif. Over the years, she advocated for a more naturalized than cultivated interpretation of the family’s namesake park, but ultimately deferred to



*Robin and Annette Pennell sit beneath the arbor commissioned by daughters Ruth Ann and Allison and designed by Ruth Ann, an architect, for their mother’s 75th birthday in May 2004; Annette died five years later.*

Major’s judgment and vision. The Close family had a piece of land on Highway H in northern Greene County that they intended to donate for a walking park. But in the interim, Major found the land adjacent to Nathanael Greene Park. It was ideally situated by a greenway envisioned along South Creek. It had potential for a sweeping vista up to the original park. A small stream and pond contributed to good soil.

“Actually the original dream was to have an arboretum of all Missouri native trees,” Marthe Close recalls.

The Florida owners of the property weren’t interested in selling, despite being approached by commercial real estate developers and then-SMSU, which had lost its chance to acquire the original Nathanael Greene property.

Major Close set out to pique the interest of Don Akers. Don’s only real gardening experience dated to a backyard plot at the St. Louis home where he and his wife, Betty, had begun their married life. But Don

## 2000

- President: Ann Webster
- Lake dredging begins in May with a \$63,000 contract.
- Springfield Botanical Gardens Association becomes Friends of the Garden.
- Anne Drummond donates \$50,000 through the Community Foundation; Lake Drummond is named.
- IRS approves FOG’s nonprofit status.
- Construction starts on south walk.

## 2001

- President: Ann Webster
- First Master Plan submitted to Parks.
- FOG joins American Association of Botanical Gardens and Arboreta.
- Dedication of Lake Drummond and naming of Close Memorial Park take place June 2.
- Need first expressed for a plan to control **ducks and geese**.
- First annual meeting takes place in October.



had started his career as a draftsman landscape architect working on O'Reilly General Hospital for renowned Springfield architect Richard P. Stahl. By now working in commercial real estate, Akers helped Close vet several sites for the park-to-be. They looked at what is now McDaniel Park at National and Sunset and the center-city area that would become Jordan Valley Park, among others.

During this time in 1996, Major Close also enlisted Jay Garrott, a colleague in the architectural program at Drury University, where Close worked in alumni development after his family's hatchery sold. Garrott agreed to take on the site evaluation as a community-based studio project for his students. They developed criteria, then identified, visited and evaluated about 10 different sites. This evaluation led to the same conclusion as Major's initial instinct: The very best site was the one next to Nathanael Greene Park.

The students spent the second half of that semester studying how the existing park and proposed park could integrate; where a botanical building might go, where parking should be located, what would be the best access to the lake.

"It was just a dream. This was all speculation," Garrott says. "And so basically that studio effort back in 1996 validated for him what he had been thinking about that parcel of land. That 50 acres was probably the best site in town for doing the type of botanical park and initiative he was looking at. The integration with Nathanael Greene worked well. The Japanese garden was there; the little homestead was there.

"At that point," Garrott recalls, "Major began actively trying to find ways to acquire that land, which he subsequently did."

### THE VISION TAKES SHAPE

The Close family sold the land intended for a park north of Springfield and purchased the 55 acres next to Nathanael Greene in 1996 with the intention of turning it over to the now combined Springfield-Greene County Park Board. Again, the department had no money to develop the property, but pledged maintenance and other assistance. Major Close and his kitchen cabinet—those folks now etched in stone—formed

the Springfield Botanical Gardens Association, the precursor to today's group, to organize the largely volunteer effort to create and maintain gardens in the new park. But what Parks also offered was the opportunity for a future election to fund parks and stormwater improvements.

One of the fledgling association's first actions was approving a partnership with Parks, Greene County, and University of Missouri Extension for a \$1.8 million building project with the botanical group taking the lead on private donations. Parks already had draft building plans in the works; the botanical group had its own ideas and one of the first tests of the strong-willed personalities emerged. Parks agreed to buy out the initial architect's contract and let the Botanical Association pursue building designs. The Building Committee took on that task while other committees worked on development and marketing in pursuit of their ambitious fundraising goals.

Even before the park formally opened, the Rose Garden was planted



*The Zen Garden is a serene stop in the Mizumoto Japanese Stroll Garden.*

## 2002

- President: Don Akers
- Four-foot wooden fence placed around Hosta Gardent to keep geese, ducks, rabbits out.
- Eagle Scouts plant wildflower garden; Girl Scouts paint pole barn.
- Practice fishing approved on lake; remote boats deemed too noisy; dogs required to be leashed.
- Design and fundraising proposed for **Anne Drummond sculpture** at lakeside.
- Trail of Trees plan proposed.



## 2003

- President: Larry Henry—"With the building of the education center and the support of volunteers, the park has become a great place for the public to come and enjoy the beauty and scenery in an educational setting."
- Missouri Department of Conservation \$10,000 grant allows planting of 57 native trees and tree removal/trimming to create open space.
- Parks installs water lines around the vista.
- Dogwood logo created by Steve Ownby approved.
- FOG Mission and Vision adopted.
- Marketing Committee plans presentation using Paul Redfearn's photos.



### IN THEIR OWN WORDS

## Jay Garrott

*I think the park is an amazing testament to what someone can achieve with a civic drive and a willingness to put personal fortune and personal sweat into an effort. It is a perfect example of what someone can do with their civic life, if you have a vision and a drive and work endlessly to achieve it for the good of the larger group. The park will become a tremendous symbol of that civic approach and contribution.*



## IN THEIR OWN WORDS

### Don Akers

*The thing that I have had as my goal is to develop interest in others in the botanical center. I want it to be a place where people can go and learn. Where they'll think about a place to go and enjoy. Something that is not necessarily monumental, but something that is a center for pleasure, for enjoyment and for learning.*

first as Major Close's tribute to his father's love of them. Sam McGowan, a City Utilities electrician, earned his stone in the Founders Garden by taking responsibility for the roses and setting a pattern for future gardens to be managed by volunteers or clubs. Theta Steinert's donation from her family's greenhouse also set a precedent for the many generous gifts of plant stock to come.

The eastern section of the Hosta Garden also was open when the park was formally named. The hostas, in fact, brought several of the founders together. Dr. Bill Roston was the original president of the Greater Ozarks Hosta Society; Bob Childress was the current president. They convinced Major Close to develop a hosta garden after the rose garden.

"For the hosta garden, we took 12-15 inches of mulch and planted the hostas right in the mulch. It's still some of the best soil in the park," Childress says. Several garden centers and nurseries donated plants along with some individual growers.

The busy Garden Committee pushed forward, designing and building plots featuring lilies and iris and English-inspired design and viburnums.

"Major had the grand overview, Doc R was the designer who brought the grand overview into focus," says Childress, who became the volunteer coordinator after he retired, working 30 hours a week over the course of two to three nights and weekends. Before he retired from the nearby Associated Electrical Cooperative, he would borrow a company tractor and drive it along the trail to work at the park.

Marthe Close says Bob is a prime example of how Major had a knack for infecting others with his enthusiasm for the project.



*A stand of wild indigo in the Butterfly Garden attracts another important pollinator, the honeybee.*

"I remember meeting Bob Childress in the parking lot when he came to look at something for the hosta garden," she says. "Then all of a sudden, he was just there every day. He was an integral part of it."

## "LET'S GO DIG"

On July 6, 2000, board member and Community Foundation President Jan Horton moved to rename the association "Friends of the Garden." The new organization began to take shape as an IRS-recognized 501(c)3 with formal bylaws and membership levels. That's when attorney Lisa McKay, a board member who volunteered her legal expertise, earned her stone in the Founders Garden. Real estate agent Ann

## 2004

- President: Bob Childress
- Community Foundation makes \$30,200 grant as naming opportunity for building's kitchen.
- Waterfall budget approved for west side of Hosta Garden.
- Paul Redfearn submits design for first website.
- Susan Wade agrees to start a newsletter.
- Peggy Sauer is hired part-time for administrative work.
- Children's Garden with four statues designed by Jerany Jackson approved.
- New computer system purchased.

## 2005

- President: Bob Childress
- Carolyn Gerdes reports Speakers Bureau has been formed.
- Offer made for 150 varieties of daylilies to start a garden.
- FOG membership surpasses 100.
- **Ornamental grass garden** planted with 133 species.



Webster, active in many aspects of the community, became the first president in 2000 when land was still being cleared to open the vista and the lake was being dredged.

In 2001, then U.S. Rep. Roy Blunt attended the naming of Close Memorial Park and dedication of Lake Drummond to honor Marthe's mother, Anne, a civic force in her own right as a businesswoman and City Council member. (Years later, J. Howard Fisk, a transportation fleet owner, started a community fundraising campaign to commission sculptor James Hall for a bronze statue of Anne Drummond seated on a park bench where visitors, especially kids, frequently join her now to overlook the lake. Several of Hall's sculptures grace the gardens, including "Butterfly Girl" and the bronze of Major in his cherished White Garden—a surprise from Marthe in 2009.)

Initially, the Parks Department agreed to mow the grass in the park and provide help like delivering mulch. The Gardening Committee brimmed with ideas and concepts for this largely blank slate of acreage, knowing they needed a master plan, but unable to hold themselves back until it was ready.

"There were many of them at the time who said 'let's go dig,'" Garrott says. "I kept saying, 'dig where?' Anywhere. Well, we've got to have a plan on where to dig.

"While we were sitting down trying to figure out what was going in the park, and everybody else was saying 'let's go plant something,' Major would be down there planting. He would have gone and bought something and he'd go and stick it in; he'd find a little statue and he'd go



*This garden is English in style, more than from a botanical perspective, because of the climate difference between England and the Ozarks, says its designer, Peter Longley.*

and stick it in. He'd say someone came up and wanted to donate a bench or a statue so I went and put it in over there. I'd say: 'Okay, I'll put it on the map.'

During these early years of the public-private partnership, the bureaucracy of the public parks system and the momentum of the volunteer leaders would clash on occasion. Actually, a number of occasions, Kinney recalls, over issues like bidding and purchasing procedures.

"There were certain things we had to follow. I was getting crosswise with Finnie and Howard," he says, referring to former City Manager Tom Finnie (due to become FOG's president in 2016), and former City Attorney Howard Wright.

Ultimately, he says, he enjoyed working with the Garden Committee anchored by Major, Stan Horsch, Bill Roston and Bob Childress.

"It never slowed us down," he says. "We agreed not to let our differences go outside the group.

"They pushed the envelope each day. They were a pain sometimes, but they got things done."

## BUILDING ON THE KNOLL

Landscape architect Steve Ownby prepared the first master plan in 2001. One of the plan's first steps was to solicit bids to clear the area from the future building site down to the lake and create gravel paths to connect with the Ozark Greenways trail. While the concepts, design and creation of new gardens continued apace, other early board stalwarts on



## IN THEIR OWN WORDS Ann Webster

*One difficult decision was how to clear the land to open the view from the Botanical Center to the lake and save just the right trees. We had to admit that to take out one tree or one bush at a time would take from then to eternity — so the heavy equipment. Unfortunately, I happened by the day that there was a huge dome of brown over the area that made me think there wasn't going to be any top soil left. I lost it, went running down the hill waving my arms and yelled, 'STOP! STOP!' Fortunately only a couple of Master Gardeners saw me before I came to my senses. You can see by this time we were definitely emotionally involved.*

—FROM REMARKS AT A  
2012 FOG BOARD RETREAT;  
ANN PASSED AWAY IN MARCH 2015

## 2006

- President: Bob Childress
- Parks tax renewed with \$3 million to build Botanical Center.
- 20-year Master Plan approved.
- Water and electric lines installed.
- First Bluegrass and Blossoms Festival held.
- 2,000 paving bricks available for memorials.



## 2007

- President: Paul Redfearn—"I followed Dr. Paul Redfearn as president, my feet slipping around the giant shoes I had to fill. He was passionate about the gardens and their future, setting our sights high from the start." —Bob Kipfer
- Ice storm damages Stroll Garden trees; Ilesaki, Japan, residents donate funds for replanting.
- KY3 anchors Sara Sheffield and Ethan Forhertz marry in Hosta Garden.
- More than 10,000 annuals planted in park.
- Walk installed from White Garden to top of vista.



IN THEIR OWN WORDS

**Stan Horsch**

*Fifteen years ago, Major Close got me involved with Friends of the Garden. It has been one of my best undertakings. It has given me an opportunity to give back to a community which has given me so much. Being involved with the designing and planting of the flower beds has been very rewarding. I hope I can continue to be of service.*



*The Great Lawn fills with people during the Springfield Sister Cities Association's annual Cherry Blossom Kite Festival in April.*

the Development and Marketing/Publicity committees were working on fundraising, grantwriting, brochure writing, and all the other activities that provide backbone for a young nonprofit organization. Community volunteer champions like Carolyn Gerdes and Jan Horton, Ann Webster's loyal sidekick over the years, prospected donors and pursued grants. University Extension's Betty Lorton did yeoman's work as board secretary for years. Her boss, Gaylord Moore, now a retired horticultural specialist, was an invaluable link from the Master Gardeners and Extension to the FOG troops.

"Everyone was energetic and enthusiastic and devoted a lot of time and effort," Ownby says.

The Development Committee, chaired by Susan Boswell with her tireless energy, was tasked with raising the money to help achieve the goal everyone now had set their sights on—a sales tax designated for

Parks and related stormwater projects. Voters first approved the quarter-cent tax increase in 2002 with half for capital projects and half to pay for their long-term maintenance. Parks leaders said a 2006 renewal would include funding for a botanical building, hoping to replicate the initial success of using its many "Friends" groups such as FOG to gather support for the tax issue. The building partners would be Parks, FOG, University Extension and the Master Gardeners.

The building itself, and the fundraising goal to build it, was a moving target for years. After Parks agreed to let the botanical group propose the building's design, the board asked member Jay Garrott, who had run the student community studio project, and his colleague Bruce Moore to take over the design process. Garrott resigned from the board and took on the role of designer.

It was clear from the beginning that the perfect spot for the building

**2008**

- President: Bob Kipfer—*"I am not a 'gardener,' but Major conned me into joining the Board on the basis of my planting trees on our farm south of Ozark. This was when I discovered his selective hearing defect—he didn't understand the word 'no'. Afterward he admitted he asked me because*

*I had some experience with community boards and he wanted me to be president."*



- Granite bench honoring Dr. Paul Redfearn placed near wildflower garden.
- **Daylily Garden** includes 900 varieties.
- 14 gardens completed by year's end.

**2009**

- President: George Deatz
- Botanical Center construction begins.
- Dr. Bill Roston Native Butterfly House opens.
- First **Butterfly Festival** takes place.
- FOG wins state nonprofit award from Missouri Parks and Recreation Association.
- Reward Fund established to address theft and vandalism issues in park.



was on a knoll, perpendicular to the lake looking out across what would be a great lawn where kites now fly every April, music drifts by on summer afternoons and kids slide around on real or makeshift discs at the first accumulation of snow.

Garrott and the Building Committee had high aspirations. They wanted offices to stay down below and an expansive atrium above that would expose the light. They wanted a large gift shop, a conference space and a place for weddings and special occasions. Large decorative tresses supported the atrium to evoke a classic botanic conservatory.

“Mine was going to be a true botanical center that reflected a more organic style,” Garrott says. “The tresses in the main lobby were expensive as hell, but they had an organic float. I could have pared it way, way down, but I was trying to get an ornate piece in there. My hope was that once people started seeing the potential of what this botanic garden could be, donors would step forward.”

Estimates for this design kept creeping up. With a baseline of about \$1.5 million in commitments, the building was approaching the \$6 million or more range. In 2006, Dan Kinney retired and Jodie Adams became the new Parks Director. Eager to include a botanical center in the tax renewal coming up that year, and anticipating about \$3 million in revenue to pay for the building, the hard-charging Adams pressed for a pared-down version that could be achieved with the available resources. In a sense, the tables turned on the Building Committee when Parks paid Garrott and Moore for their services to date, just as FOG had done with Parks’ initial design.

H Design, founded by Garrott’s former student Rob Haik who had already been working with the Building Committee, completed the final design. In 2010, the 12,700-square-foot Botanical Center opened with great fanfare at a final cost of \$4.3 million, paid from the countywide sales tax revenue and partner contributions. FOG had turned over its contribution of \$434,850 to Parks the year before. The Botanical Center includes offices, a small gift shop, restrooms, conference rooms, a horticultural library, an atrium in the lower-level lobby and a large deck overlooking the great lawn.

## 2010

- President: George Deatz
- Springfield-Greene County Botanical Center opens; **Katie Steinhoff** hired as Botanical Center coordinator.
- Six new Playcore model playgrounds open throughout park.
- Bob Childress, Major Close, Stan Horsch, Bill Roston made honorary lifetime FOG members.
- Three new gardens planted, including the popular redbuds and dwarf conifers.
- About 8,000 people view Dr. Bill Roston’s Corpse Flower in bloom.
- FOG newsletter incorporated into new Greene magazine.



## 2011

- President: George Deatz
- Bluegrass and Blossoms event incorporated into Butterfly Festival.
- Dedication held for Lois K. Boswell Horticultural Library and stained glass window created by artist Robin Coulter-Crabb.
- “Wedding area” created in Dwarf Conifer garden.
- Botanical Society of Southwest Missouri merges with FOG, will maintain Stroll Garden.
- FOG establishes Advisory Board with first members: Major Close, Stan Horsch, Ruth Arneson, Bob Kipfer, Don Akers and Gabrielle White.



*Helleborus niger blooms during early spring in the Master Gardener Demonstration Gardens.*

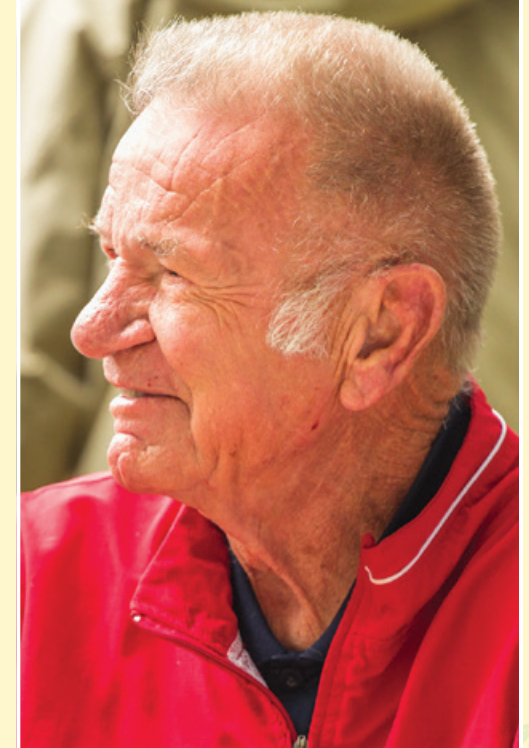
“The original building was beautiful, but we just couldn’t afford it,” Bob Childress says.

It’s still bittersweet for Garrott, who says he loves the park, but doesn’t spend much time in the building. He’s most proud that his studio students’ original vision held up, from the location of the parking lot to the building site, on axis from the lake. His favorite spot is the tiny peninsula jutting into the south side of Lake Drummond with the view across the water and across the great lawn up to that knoll where the Nathanael Greene and Close Memorial parks meet.

“I look at the joined park with great, great fondness for what I assisted Major in doing,” he says.

George Deatz, who joined the board after much of that chapter had passed, says his favorite part of the park is the Botanical Center, shared by Parks, FOG, University Extension and the Master Gardeners.

“I look at that as the heart of the park. I look at the park as the horticultural heart of Greene County.”



### IN THEIR OWN WORDS

## 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.*



## IN THEIR OWN WORDS

# George Deatz

*It's a tremendous team that makes this park facility unique. It's done through different organizations combining their talents and treasures, which are their members, and financing the operations of their individual gardens in many cases. What's this place going to be like when it's 100 years old? I don't know. But I can sure envision that it's going to be a tremendous asset for this community.*

## GROWING MEMBERS AS WELL AS GARDENS

Deatz used to ride his bike along the South Creek Greenway from his home on Plainview Road. Retired from a career in automotive resources development, he'd actually majored in forestry and worked for the U.S. Forest Service before going into business.

One day he stopped to talk to the group he kept seeing at work in the Hosta Garden. Before long, Major Close recruited Deatz and Bob Kipfer to develop the arboretum. Deatz made a financial contribution to become a "friend of the garden." Eventually, both served as board presidents—Deatz for three terms.

"You have to picture in 2004–05 standing at the bottom of the hill at the Rose Garden. There was no building here, no nothing here. There were a lot of overgrown woods still in place," Deatz says.

"The area where the Butterfly House is was overgrown. It was hard to envision what Major had in mind. But when you talked to him, you realized what the program was going to become. It was something I thought was worth investing my time."

Deatz recognized the need to build FOG's sustainability for both the finances and volunteer pool. He set his sites on building membership, from 225 when he became president in 2009 to a goal of 1,000. When he completed his terms, FOG had 1,060 members.

He preached the virtues of the park to all the garden groups and like-minded art and camera clubs. FOG offered free one-year memberships as a perk for residents moving into the nearby apartments. He credits long-time journalist George Freeman, now editor



*The Hosta Garden is one of the park's two nationally recognized gardens.*

of Ozarks Living magazine, and veteran nurseryman and potter Lee Coates, with amping up publicity with a strong newsletter. FOG was an early adopter of online blogging and then electronic newsletters, thanks to others like Peter Longley and Frank Shipe. More events were taking place, including FOG's first signature event, the Bluegrass and Blossoms festival organized by board member Kenny Knauer.

Deatz wanted to solidify FOG's ability to stand on its own and fulfill its commitments. The sales tax for parks and stormwater improvements fell victim to a post-Great Recession period of political turmoil when county leadership declined to ask voters for a third renewal effort.

"We've been blessed with having tremendous boards over the years that have understood the vision of what this garden is and made sure it stayed on track and didn't get lost or sidelined in activities that would take it from its core mission," Deatz says. "If we can stay on the 20-year original plan and not get too far off track, we're moving in the direction that was envisioned by the creators of the big picture out here."

## "BUTTERFLIES ARE LIKE LOVE ..."

Deatz's efforts to raise awareness and recruit more members benefitted from a gamechanger that came along in 2009.

Dr. Bill Roston, a primary care physician who lives in Forsyth, loves butterflies. Having started with FOG when he and Bob Childress convinced Major Close to put in the Hosta Garden, Roston can reel off the succession that followed—ornamental grasses, Asiatic lilies, Irises, a Butterfly Garden, daylilies,

## 2012

- Presidents: Nancy Hopkins — "I was only president for nine months, but it was a great nine months. During my time, we had our first meeting of all the organizations that call the gardens and Botanical Center 'home' with lots of great food and giveaways."
- Winter Garden created.
- The Hopkins and Close families purchase two golf carts for volunteers so vehicles aren't driven through grounds.
- FOG has "Greene" float in St. Patrick's Day parade—a first and a last.
- The American Hemerocallis Society names the Daylily Garden a National Daylily Display Garden.

## 2013

- President: Lisa Bakerink
- The Hosta Garden is named an American Hosta Society National Display Garden.
- Efforts begin to catalog and create signage for all plants.
- Springfield Water Garden Society splits proceeds with FOG of first public pond tour.
- **Statue of young boy doing a handstand** donated by family who lost 18-year-old son.



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 there 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 summer Butterfly Festival is a major annual draw.



*The Asiatic lilies, one of the earliest gardens, show bursts of color near the Butterfly House.*

There are a lot of children that love it there,” Roston 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.”

#### A GOAL ACCOMPLISHED

While Roston was sharing his story in the Botanical Center lobby on an August afternoon in 2015, several people stopped to say hello. Nearing 80 and still practicing medicine part time, Roston hadn’t been at the park as much as usual; when he was, he was mostly hidden away in



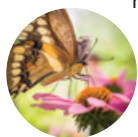
#### IN THEIR OWN WORDS

### Peter Longley

*This is probably the most important public park in Springfield. I don’t think there’s any question in our minds at all that we have the third greatest garden in Missouri. The Missouri Botanical Garden has pride of place. I think we can rival Powell Gardens in Kansas City. That triangle is really good for the Midwest where it’s not that easy to grow things. Thanks to the Close family and those who got us going, we can say after 15 years that we have two nationally recognized gardens in the park.*

## 2014

- President: Lisa Bakerink
- Springfield-Greene County Park Board officially adopts the name “**Springfield Botanical Gardens.**”
- FOG lifetime membership criteria approved.
- FOG and MU Extension hire Kelly McGowan as horticulture educator; her father-in-law is FOG founder Sam McGowan.
- Public Works completes Lake Drummond stabilization and beautification project.
- Memorandum of Understanding approved with MSU for Dr. Chris Barnhart to curate **The Butterfly House.**



## 2015

- President: Lisa Bakerink
- FOG celebrates 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary.
- Mizumoto Stroll Garden turns 30; celebrated at 20<sup>th</sup> annual Japanese Fall Festival. Yuriko Mizumoto Scott, who has performed countless tea ceremonies, is named a Lifetime FOG Member.
- Process to review proposed gardens and future maintenance approved with Parks Department.
- Botanical Center reaches five-year milestone.
- Lisa Bakerink hired as first FOG Executive Director.



## IN THEIR OWN WORDS

### *Lisa Bakerink*

*Individual and corporate memberships have been imperative in growing this organization and will always be our life-blood. I am excited, however, to pursue other avenues of revenue generation for even greater long-term sustainability.*

*I really do believe that a place like we have here cares for the person who needs care and the caregiver alike. We provide that solace and peace and earthiness that everybody needs and that makes us uniquely set apart in the not-for-profit world as a great investment opportunity.*

a fern garden he's developing in a shady grove near the Butterfly House. When FOG President Lisa Bakerink greeted him, he kissed her hand in a gesture as symbolic as passing the torch from one generation to the next—from one of the founders to FOG's first full-time Executive Director, a motion just approved in a board meeting a few minutes earlier.

Hiring an executive director had been a goal of the FOG board for years. FOG came very close to having a director supported by the Parks Department during George Deatz's tenure, but it slipped away with other Parks priorities emerging after Director Jodie Adams retired.

Bakerink, an Iowa transplant who moved to Springfield when her husband Randy accepted a new job here in 2007, had been working 30 hours a week as a volunteer board member. Calm, competent and patient, she's a connector working to strengthen the partnerships that define "friends" of the garden. One of her key goals as board president was to develop a process to review proposed gardens, from design to budget to maintenance, to make sure FOG and Parks are working in concert. She wants to increase support at all levels, from membership to planned gifts to corporate sponsorships. It's not glamorous, but it's the work necessary to move FOG into a sustainable, mature nonprofit.

"We've had a lot of focus on new gardens and getting people in," she says. "I think we need to take a step back and look at every area and make garden enhancements and signage that are going to bring the whole place together. With our current 30-plus gardens, there are ways we can tie them together and just make the place feel like you're entering this magnificent garden."

Like Roston, Bakerink also loves butterflies. She grew up on a farm where her mom would bring in black swallowtail caterpillars. Later, she started raising and tagging monarchs for Monarch Watch and taught her kids the science of butterflies. She found the Butterfly House as she was struggling to find her place in her newly adopted hometown.

"I finally found that sense of belonging that we had left behind."

### **A FAMILY'S LEGACY; A COMMUNITY'S GIFT**

Today, there's little doubt the Springfield Botanical Gardens is one of the state's top three such gardens, along with the official pride of state horticulture, the Missouri Botanical Garden in St. Louis, and the former Boy Scout camp that became Kansas City's Powell Gardens in 1988.

Two of Springfield's gardens already are nationally recognized—the Hosta and Daylily gardens. Our horticultural history lives on in the 1850s Kickapoo Edge Prairie Garden, maintained by the Missouri Prairie Foundation. A 10-ton piece of jade rock from Alaska commands the entrance to the Mizumoto Stroll Garden, which welcomes thousands to the annual Japanese Fall Festival hosted by the Springfield Sister Cities Association. Given by a friend of the late Charlotte Collier, a 1750s-era sundial from Yorkshire graces the English Garden. An ambitious vision is underway to develop a sensory garden to access all five senses through



*Ric Mayer, familiar with prairie gardens through his work with Ozark Greenways and the Missouri Prairie Foundation, helped revive the Kickapoo Edge Prairie Garden.*

taste, touch, water, scent, and of course, visual beauty. And appropriately, the first garden—the roses—is the first to undergo extensive renovation with new hardscaping and an intent to go completely organic.

"I believe this is the most important park in the city," says horticultural interpreter Peter Longley, who writes prolifically in an online newsletter about the weekly highlights of color and bloom, seasonal changes and special activities.

For many, the park's attributes are more personal. Weddings in the hosta garden; quiet walks in the evening; kids rushing to their favorite play areas; benches and trees dedicated to the memory of loved ones.

Major Close has turned in his trowel now for a seat on FOG's Advisory Board. But he still visits the park daily to sit in the hosta garden, have a picnic lunch with Marthe, or watch kids play on the swings. And he still treasures the vista, Marthe says.

So does Jay Garrott who, like Major and Bob and Doc and Stan and the others whose contributions are now etched on the Founders Garden stones, could imagine seeing that vista through the trees.

"When Major started talking about his dream for this park—what he wanted to do for his father, what he wanted to do for his family, what he wanted to do for this city, he was really driven," Garrott says. "If Major Close hadn't come along and been the asset to this community that he has been, there would be no botanical garden out here. It is only by the sheer will of Major that this thing has gotten done." 🌱



## *Thank you to our Partners*

Federated Garden Clubs

*Brentwood Garden Club*

*Cherry Court Garden Club*

*Ever Green Garden Club*

*Hillbilly Gardeners Garden Club*

Gray/Campbell Farmstead Association

Greater Ozarks Audubon Society

Greater Ozarks Hosta Society

Iris Society of the Ozarks

Master Gardeners of Greene County

Missouri Master Naturalists—*Springfield Plateau Chapter*

Missouri Native Plant Society

Missouri Prairie Foundation

Ozark Daylily Society

Ozark Garden Railway Society

Ozark Greenways

Ozarks Regional Lily Society

Pink Dogwood Garden Club

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Southwest Missouri Camera Club

Springfield Area Herb Society

Springfield Host Lions Club

Springfield Orchid Society

Springfield Public Works

Springfield Sister Cities Association

Springfield Water Garden Society

Studio 55

University of Missouri Extension

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Deanna Armstrong

Ruth Arneson

J.J. Averett

Cindy Baird

Lisa Bakerink

Chris Barnhart

Murray Beairst

Jessi Beauchamp

Carla Beezley

Susan Boswell

Barbara Brown

Dorothy Brunskill

Patrick Byers

Susan Cardwell

Dick Carson

Kim Chaffin

Bob Childress

Christine Chiu

Major Close

Marthe Close

Lee Coates

Rosalie Cook

Jack Crabb

George Deatz

Jeanne Duffey

Pam Duitsman

Tom Dye

Christie Eden

Anson Elliott

Tom Finnie

Jan Fisk

George Freeman

Mary Gallagher

Jay Garrott

Carolyn Gerdes

Mary Ann Greene

Cathy Gutridge

Dan Hedgepeth

Larry Henry

Avis Holloway

Nancy Hopkins

Stan Horsch

Jan Horton

Myra Houge

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Bob Kipfer

Joe Kleiber

Kenny Knauer

Mike Kohr

Tom Lakowske

Peter Longley

Betty Lorton

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Sandra Lowther

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John McKenzie

Paula Melton

Dana Mirowski

Gaylord Moore

Patti Moore

Marcia Nelson

Sharon Owings

Steven Ownby

Brent Bothwell-Palmer

Annette Pennell

Judy Phillips

Heather Parker

Mike Rankin

Paul Redfearn

Bill Roston

Peggy Sauer

Nancy Schmidt

Nikki Sells

Kathy Sheppard

Betty Shook

Mike Sidebottom

Jacklyn Skaggs

Don Snyder

Katie Steinhoff

Pam Trewatha

Betty Jane Turner

Kauleen Volentine

Mike Ward

Pat Ware

Ann Webster

Gabrielle White

Cindy Willis

Linda Whiting

Jan Wooten

Gail Wright

Christy Yoakum



*“Gardens are not made by singing  
‘Oh, how beautiful!’ and sitting in the shade.”*

—RUDYARD KIPLING