



Fall 2010/Winter 2011

Ten years of development at the Garden have yielded results

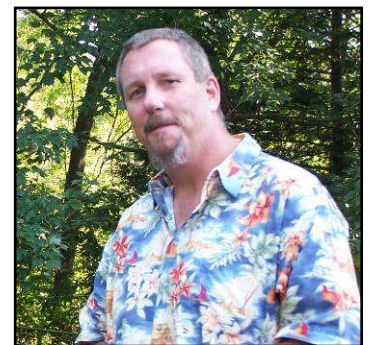
Linda Bagby, WVBG President

What is it about anniversaries that encourages us to reflect on all that has happened? It is difficult to believe that 10 years have passed since the Morgantown Utility Board finished timbering around the former Tibbs Run reservoir and since MUB turned over site management to the WVBG. A reorganized Board of Directors was enlisted by George Longenecker to help with a new challenge: overlaying the dream of a botanic garden onto an actual physical location.

Can you remember what the area was like back then? The attractive spot beckoned, but there was nowhere to park, no road to get down the hill to the reservoir, only a few dirt trails and nothing to tell a person where to go. Slash from the logging littered the meadow. Rusting vehicles, tires and trash spoiled the natural beauty. Slowly things began to change. On-site, volunteers began to clear the debris. A parking area was established off Tyrone Road. An educational walk program was initiated to help visitors learn about the abundant natural wonders. Off-site, Board committees started working on fund-raising and publicity ideas. The "Gardens of the Mon" tour was born. Community members were encouraged to become "Friends" of the WVBG and to contribute ideas as a Master Plan for the Garden's development took shape.

Let's skip over the years to today. Site changes abound. A handmade sign announces the Garden's entrance on Tyrone Road. A new trellis adorns the Eclectic Garden. A winding road delivers visitors to a lower parking area with views of the colorful butterfly garden. Guests can now explore a well-marked network of trails, many of which are universally accessible. Educational opportunities have been expanded. Groups enjoy guided tours and families gather for events such as the Fall Children's Festival. Numerous volunteers help to maintain the gardens; Eagle Scout candidates work on projects (we have had 15 so far); and neighbors from the new Imperial East subdivision benefit from a lively stroll. A new boardwalk and interpretive signs will soon adorn a wetland area at the Garden.

Within the organization things have also changed. Last month, the Board said "good-bye" to long-time member and Board President Tim Prescott. We wish Tim and his family the very best as they relocate to Illinois. Until the Annual Meeting of the Board of Directors in November, I will be serving as WVBG President, which is why I am writing this column today. (Continued on page 7)



Tim Prescott, best wishes
to you! Photo by Linda Bagby

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West Virginia Botanic Garden

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 Actual location: 1061 Tyrone Road

www.wvbg.org

The West Virginia Botanic Garden, Inc. (WVBG) is incorporated in West Virginia as a tax-exempt, not-for-profit [501c (3)] organization. Contributions are deductible to the extent allowed by law. West Virginia residents may obtain a summary of the registration and financial documents for the West Virginia Botanic Garden, Inc. from the Secretary of State, State Capitol, Charleston, WV 25305. Registration does not imply endorsement.

Newsletter by Ellen Hrabovsky, Pam Yagle,
 Linda Bagby, Erin Himmel Smaldone and
 George Longenecker

Building a wetland boardwalk requires a lot of teamwork

George Longenecker, Executive Director

Things are not always wet in a wetland. Thank goodness! This spring a foot of water covered the Jones Run wetland – only the stems of the trees and shrubs could be seen sticking out of the slowly flowing inundation. Come August and a long rainless period, everything had dried up -- even the stream through the wetland baked hard -- providing an opportunity to build a boardwalk and not even get our feet muddy. But beneath the surface it was still a wetland, making the driving of 4x4 posts to support the boardwalk a relatively easy task. Mountaineer ChalleNGe Academy cadets stood on stacks of wooden pallets to get started and made short work of sinking the posts down to the hard layer several feet down. This was done with a pile driver specially made by John Lojewski. Once in place, White Oak ledgers were bolted onto the pilings to further support the walkway.

Setting the ledgers was more difficult than anticipated because many of the pilings seemed to have their own idea about the direction they should be going. We were thankful for strong arms to make the adjustments and for soggy ground below to allow the adjustments to happen.

Next, the 4x8 foot boardwalk units, made this spring by the Monongalia County Technical Education Center students, were set atop the ledgers and secured in place. The observation platform at the end of the boardwalk has been constructed on site. The last phase is the addition handrail posts and railings to keep people safe. The 1200' of railings will be placed as part of an Eagle Scout project. Special interpretive signs have been designed to tell the wetland story, and these will be set in place when everything else is finished. We thank the many volunteers that are making all of this happen.

**Come check it out in November – our expected
completion date!**

**Come to a “magical” place for the 2010 Fall Children’s Festival
Saturday, October 16, 2010 from 1 to 4 p.m.**

“Hi there, my name is Courtney. My son, Logan, and I are avid outdoor enthusiasts who gather our energy and happiness from being outside, in the fresh air, immersed in the sights and sounds of nature. Provide us a way to socialize or contribute time to community projects in a natural setting and we will go out of our way to be there. ... We hope sharing our story tempts you into joining us during the many family oriented events planned this year. We would love to share this truly wonderful and 'magical garden.'”

Courtney and her son sent us a wonderful piece about the joy they discover in the WVBG. You, too, can find that fun in our “magical garden” at the Fall Children’s Festival this year.



This fairy house is solid.

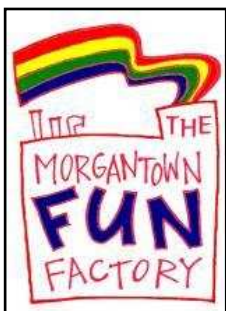
Photo by Courtney

“Well-marked trails leading to nook and cranny fairy sites that may give up their secret homes ... if you look closely enough. Or troll houses just begging to be tried on for size.” Yes, as you can see, some of last year’s fairy houses survived the rough winter, but more are needed. We have expanded the boundaries of the Fairy Garden a bit so you can build more houses. Bring your imagination; nature provides the rest. Pictures of your child with his or her fairy house will be made for a small donation, courtesy of C. McDaniel & Co.

Thanks to a grant from **IMPACT E*A*R*T*H**, the **Natural Leaders** program will also be featured. Youngsters 9-12 assisted by our Director of Education, Erin Himmel Smaldone, will display their knowledge about selected nature topics. Don’t miss these young people and their demonstrations and activities.



A young crafter enjoys sorting leaves. Photo by Dee Fulton



The **Morgantown Fun Factory** will be working with us to make a variety of fairy crafts and to share their vision for our children.

Additional crafts will include pumpkin painting, making pine cone bird feeders and a variety of leaf-oriented activities. Nature Bingo will provide an opportunity for a self-guided walk in the Botanic Garden while completing a bingo card of “finds” in the woods and meadows.

A bulb sale will offer the chance to order spring blooming flowers. You can obtain a packet with all the information needed to place an order. Souvenirs of the WVBG and other items will be for sale. Kindly bring cash or checks. No credit cards, please.

No fall festival would be complete without seasonally appropriate refreshments. There will be cookies, breads, apples, cider, cheese and crackers, and trail mix ingredients.

The very best news of all: Admission is Free!

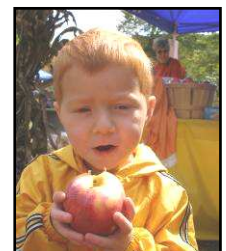


Photo by Dee Fulton

Common plants -- are they friend or foe?

Ellen Hrabovsky

Many of us value plants for their beauty or their uses on the dinner table. Rarely do we look at those “weeds” in the meadows, forests and roadsides as anything but pests. Hold on a minute! There are numerous plants that were mainstays in the kitchen and pharmacies of our forebearers. Let’s examine a few of those weeds and flowers. Some are helpful and some are dangerous. Do you know which is what?



The lovely fruit of the Pokeweed contains dangerous toxins. Photo by Ellen Hrabovsky

Pokeberry or Pokeweed (*Phytolacca americana*): In the late summer the plant is brilliantly colored and very visible, but this is not the time to consider sampling the berries. In the spring the early green shoots contain vitamin C and were once prized as an early salad to combat the lack of greens during the long winter months. However, the greens were boiled carefully prior to eating. Later in the year the entire plant is poisonous including the roots, stems, leaves and fruit. Pokeweed contains a saponin mixture called phytolaccatoxin. This substance interferes with cell division and causes blood abnormalities. There are currently no recommended uses for this attractive but dangerous plant.

Narcissus, daffodil (*Narcissus spp.*): This lovely and prized harbinger of spring can cause serious toxicity. The plant contains lycorine, which is a toxic crystalline alkaloid. It may be lethal if ingested in high enough quantities. Symptoms can include vomiting, diarrhea and convulsions. Lycorine is found in the bulb, which may be confused with onions. There are reports of these bulbs being added to a pot of stew leading to accidental poisoning. Children are especially vulnerable because of their small bodies. Narcissus is listed by poison control centers as one of the 10 most toxic plants in the world.



Narcissus bloom



The leaves and flower of the “locoweed”

Jimson Weed or Locoweed (*Datura stramonium*): This common weed from the nightshade family is an erect annual herb forming a bush up to 3–5 ft. (1–1.5 m) tall. The leaves are soft, irregularly undulate and toothed. The fragrant flowers are trumpet-shaped, white to creamy or violet, and 2.5 to 3.5 in. long. They rarely open completely. The egg-shaped seed capsule is walnut-sized and either covered with spines or smooth. At maturity it splits into four chambers, each with dozens of small black seeds.

The plant's toxic ingredients are the belladonna alkaloids atropine and scopolamine. The phrase "red as a beet, dry as a bone, blind as a bat, mad as a hatter" has been used to describe the Jimson weed's effects. All parts of the plant are toxic. Atropine and scopolamine block the neurotransmitter acetylcholine, causing dry mouth, dilated pupils, high temperature (but reduced sweating) and blurred vision. Psychological effects include confusion, euphoria and delirium. The toxic effects are very

unpleasant, so chronic use by those looking for a “high” is quite unlikely.

The Nightshade family (Solanaceae) includes many toxic and non-toxic plants. Belladonna or deadly nightshade is one of the more toxic ones. Chili peppers, tobacco, petunias, tomatoes, potatoes and eggplant are also members of this family. People have been poisoned by eating the stems and leaves of potatoes, green sprouting potatoes and by eating tobacco as cooked greens.

Wintergreen or Eastern Teaberry (*Gaultheria procumbens*): It is a small low-growing woody plant of the Heath family (Ericaceae). The leaves are evergreen with a distinct oil of wintergreen scent. The flowers are bell-shaped, white and borne singly or in short racemes. The berry-like fruit is actually a dry capsule surrounded by fleshy calyx. It grows in the acid soil of pine or hardwood forests although it generally produces fruit only in sunnier forest areas.

The bright red wintergreen berries have been used medicinally. Native Americans brewed a tea from the leaves to alleviate rheumatic symptoms, headache, fever, sore throat and various other aches and pains. During the American Revolution wintergreen leaves were used as a substitute for tea, which was scarce.

Wintergreen oil is a very aromatic pale yellow or pinkish liquid that contains methyl salicylate (98%). One fluid ounce of oil of wintergreen is equivalent to 55.7 grams of aspirin or about 171 adult aspirin tablets (US). It is effective as a pain killer, but anyone with salicylate sensitivity should not use this product. The pleasant flavor gave rise to Clark's Teaberry chewing gum.



The evergreen leaves and the bright red berries of the Common Wintergreen Photo Ellen Hrabovsky



An artist's sketch of the Mayapple

Mayapple, umbrella plant or mandrake (*Podophyllum peltatum*) is an herbaceous perennial native to eastern North America. The plant is widespread and appears in moist, open woodlands. Individual shoots are often connected in colonies by systems of thick tubers and rhizomes. Its name celebrates the arrival of the flower in May. The single waxy 6-9 petalled flower nods in the fork of two large umbrella-like leaves. By early summer the flower matures into a yellow-greenish berry fruit (apple) 2-5 cm long and is ripe by mid-summer. The “apple” is the only part of the plant considered edible and should be eaten in moderation to avoid side effects. When fully ripe it has a strong “banana-oil” fragrance.

The rhizome of the mayapple has been used for a variety of medicinal purposes, originally by Native Americans and later by European settlers, especially as a laxative. The plant produces podophyllotoxin, a fatal ingredient of the herb, which stops cell division and also possesses features that are able to restrain tumors. Significantly, the FDA in the United States has approved two medications -- etoposide and teniposide -- prepared from podophyllotoxin for use in this country in the treatment of malignancies.

This is only the very “tip of the iceberg” concerning the value and hazards of some common plants. The hope is that each reader will be stimulated to learn more about the wonderful world of plants that surround us on a daily basis. To learn more, *A Field Guide to Edible Wild Plants of Eastern and Central North America* by Lee Peterson is a great place to start.

We have had another fun, productive summer at the Garden

By Erin Himmel Smaldone

Wow, is it October already? It seems not long ago that I was walking through the Botanic Garden relishing the spring flowers and welcoming back the songbirds. So much has happened at the WVBG since spring, and it's all thanks to our many wonderful community volunteers and supporters.

The beautiful flower beds were prepared and planted during regularly scheduled Saturday morning work days. Those same beds, as well as the grassy areas and trails, have been lovingly maintained by a small group of Garden Keepers and site workers throughout the season. Visitors (both human and of the butterfly, bird and bee variety) are thankful for the hard work of these volunteers.

If you were able to attend one or more of our 12 educational walks this year, you know how much we appreciate our generous and knowledgeable walk leaders. Their enthusiasm is infectious as they help us to understand the natural world around us. New this year at the WVBG is a series of workshops on outdoor art and photography. I've heard nothing but glowing reviews from the folks who have participated in these workshops. Special thanks to Glenn Runions, Dave Smaldone and Autumn McDaniel for donating their time and expertise. We hope to expand our workshop offerings in the years to come.

Did you attend the **Green Gathering at the Garden** or the **Gardens of the Mon** tour this year? Are you looking forward to the upcoming **Fall Children's Festival**? Gathering members of our community around a single cause or for a day of fun is important to us. We are lucky to have an outstanding group of event volunteers that we can count on for ideas, enthusiasm and assistance. We hope you enjoy our events each year.

One of the most exciting developments at the Garden this year is the construction of our new wetland boardwalk. We are thankful for support from the WVDNR Wildlife Division. Tremendous assistance from the community has made this project possible. Students from MTEC have constructed boardwalk segments: cadets from the Mountaineer ChalleNGe Academy have been assisting with boardwalk assembly: and several WVU student

groups as well as others in the community have volunteered their time. We appreciate all of the help and we look forward to a completed boardwalk later this fall!

Cadets in the background are driving the posts while others dig post holes.

Photo by Linda Bagby



George and some of the cadets wrestle a post into position.

Photo by Ellen Hrabovsky



To demonstrate our appreciation, we are holding a special event to recognize our 2010 volunteers on December 3rd this year. Look for an email invitation soon. For questions regarding this event, email Erin at Erin@wvbg.org or call 304-594-0153.

INDIVIDUAL (\$25) -- discounts on **Logo Items** (caps, shirts, etc.), periodic **WVBG newsletters**, invitations to special **Members Only** activities, reduced prices for **Special Events** and special previews of **Plant Sales**

FAMILY (\$50) -- the same opportunities that apply to an **Individual** but extended to the immediate family

CONTRIBUTOR (\$100) -- all of the above plus a **Gift Item** and **Discounts at Participating Nurseries and Garden Centers**

SPONSOR (\$250) -- all of the above plus a **Second Gift Item** of your choice

PATRON (\$500) -- all of the above plus a small group **Free Private Tour** of the WVBG

BENEFACTOR (\$1,000) -- all of the above plus a **Home Garden Consultation** by the WVBG Executive Director

I would like to become a **Friend of the Botanic Garden** at the _____ level and will make my check payable to the "West Virginia Botanic Garden." **You may publish my name.** ___Yes ___No

Please send me planned giving information.

Name _____

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Thank you for your generosity! Let us know if you would like to save paper and receive the newsletter in electronic form.

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Ten Years of development at the West Virginia Botanic Garden has yielded results

(Continued from Page 1)

Behind the scenes the Board, its committees, numerous volunteers and now staff actively work to develop the organization that will cultivate the growth of Garden. Major strides have been made in the past 10 years. A WVBG website and a Facebook page have been created to provide information about the Garden and its related activities. Other public relations activities include the newsletter you are reading, publicizing the WVBG through events, information booths, tourism websites state-wide, and increasing numbers of articles and flyers in print, on radio and TV. Other committees work to direct the administrative and physical development of the WVBG. Grant writers search for funding and, so far, have brought in tens of thousands of dollars.

We are partnering with other community organizations in a variety of ways. A number of groups joined to educate the public about sustainable development at our Green Gathering in May. University classes and volunteers have provided assistance, which has included marketing plans, history research, event staffing and on-site projects.

What will happen in the next ten years? With your continuing help and generous contributions from governmental agencies, foundations, organizations and individuals, we expect to see major changes. We are proud of the accomplishments to date and have great enthusiasm for the future.

We encourage you to "Come Grow with Us!"



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Come Grow With Us!

A WVBG Special Appeal Letter will arrive this fall

Later in October you will receive a request to consider providing a special gift to the West Virginia Botanic Garden. This gift is separate from and in addition to your membership renewal. Our form will offer a number of categories into which you may choose to assign a gift. Your generosity can make it possible for us to make great strides in the next ten years to exceed those of the past ten. Thank you for your continuing support of the WVBG.



Monarch butterfly and Prairie
Blazing Star Photo by Ellen Hrabovsky