

## History of the Hummingbird & Butterfly Garden (updated 5/16/13)

Rondalyn Reeser, Volunteer Coordinator

In March of 2000 Girl Scout Troop #1744 set out to complete their Silver Award Project. With the help of troop leaders, Howard County Conservancy Staff, and donations from the Howard County Bird Club, the DIGS Garden Club and local nurseries, these four girls founded a garden!

The garden measuring approximately 25' x 35' was begun on untilled ground that was covered with newspaper and layered with mulch. Holes were dug through the newspaper and plants inserted. An assortment of annuals, perennials, shrubs and herbs were selected on their ability to serve as host or nectar sources for butterflies and hummingbirds. The girls made and installed stepping stones and butterfly houses along a horseshoe pathway through the garden. The garden was enclosed with deer fencing.

In 2005 the Howard County Bird Club was approached to make another donation on behalf of the garden. In a letter dated March 23, 2005, Marianne Pettis requested a grant fund of \$1001 from the Howard County Bird Club. There is no record of the money being granted but the work requested in the grant was completed. This was installing new fencing and gates as Boy Scout Eagle project. Maryland Master Gardeners stepped in and expanded the garden, planted more native plants, and added visitor friendly gates, paths and signage with the goal of maintaining the garden for educational purposes, as stated in the letter.

Beth Carr called the Conservancy in September of 2006 to see if her Girl Scout troop could do community service somewhere on the property. Beth and her family had been going to the Antique Farm Days for a number of years and she could see that the Children's garden (now gone) needed some work. Beth spoke with Martha Moore the Conservancy Volunteer Coordinator and she suggested the girls could work in the Butterfly and Hummingbird Garden.

Troop #261 under the leadership of Beth Carr, met with Martha on 10-13-06 and Martha gave the girls an overview of the garden stating that another troop had worked in the garden at one time but had moved on.

The task for this new troop was to try to restore the garden. It was so overgrown it was impossible to walk more than two feet in any direction. It was wild! There were no paths and only one of the original stepping stones visible (the large square stone).

On 10/20/06 Troop #261 conducted their first work date. The main objective was to remove field grass, briars, saplings, poison ivy and establish a path around the inside. The girls found some of the original stepping stones, most were dug up with shovels, cleaned up and set aside until the new paths were mulched.

The troop's next visit next was in November of 2006 when they planted, mulched and labeled about 20 native plants supplied by the Conservancy. At that time Martha told them about plans of a Boy Scout Eagle Project to reinforce the fence and make a proper gate. Over the winter each

girl made a stepping stone to add to the ones previously found in the garden. The new fence was finished in late spring of 2007. The garden dimensions were changed slightly with the fence installation and it was noted that many of the plants that were planted the previous November did not survive.

Troop #261 tended the garden every fall and spring from 2006- spring 2009. The troop purchased landscape fabric for the main paths and a few new plants that included host and nectar plant as well as two butterfly bushes.

Each of the 16 girls in the troop donated 15 or more hours not including their parents help to restoring order to the garden. They really enjoyed working in the garden and learned a lot about butterflies in the process. Troop # 261 completed their care of the butterfly garden in the spring of 2009. Beth planned to gather up photos of the group at work in the garden. The troop donated \$50.00 to go towards the purchase of a plaque to be placed on the fence recognizing Troop #261 and to purchase a few more plants.

In the spring of 2009 two new volunteers, Rondalyn Reeser and Suzanne Klick, began working in the garden with a new plan. The Conservancy joined Monarch Watch and had the butterfly garden certified and registered as an official Monarch Waystation. The goal of the Monarch Watch is to create, conserve, and protect monarch habitats. A sign was purchased to display in the garden and monarch nectar and host plants were donated and purchased to give the garden its new look. Beth Carr along with volunteers Rondalyn Reeser and Suzanne Klick spruced up the garden in anticipation of welcoming a new group of girl scouts.

In May of 2009 Beth located a new Girl Scout troop and a new leader to carry on the work in the butterfly garden. Troop #2114 led by April Manning began working in the garden in the summer of 2009. The girls planned to create information handouts and activities to be placed in the Information Mailbox for visitors to enjoy. April set up a weekly garden maintenance schedule for the girls beginning September, 2009. An Eagle Scout will design a wooden kiosk to be placed at the entrance of the butterfly garden. This will be used to display butterfly facts and photos of volunteers and their projects in the garden. The scout will also make a garden bench, and mulch the garden in preparation for winter.

April 24, 2010, Earth Day at the Conservancy was a great work day! April Manning and Troop #2114 came out to the garden and did major planting and clean-up. They created the first mailbox "Butterfly Activity Book." One of many they plan to leave in the mail box for children to take home. The group rearranged the garden stone path and made plans to create their own stones. The girls planted 30 new native plants most of which were supplied by the Conservancy. Rondalyn and Suzanne created a 'Garden Map' with photo sheets of the plants in bloom. These were placed in the mailbox for visitor reference. Once the kiosk is built the sheets will be placed on display along with Girl Scout photo and butterfly facts. Copies of the "The Butterflies of Howard County" (prepared by the Howard County Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society) were placed in the mailbox for visitors to take home or to use on their nature walk. Suzanne and Rondalyn are in the process of developing a butterfly information sheet. A "Monarch Watch" information notebook was placed in the Conservancy Visitor's Center. Copies of the notebook were also placed in the file cabinet in the storage room.

2011 begins a new chapter for the garden! The Conservancy donated \$150 to purchase new plants for the Girl Scout Troop 2114 to plant and take care of. On June 23, 2011, Eagle Scout, Chris Strem, and his Boy Scout Troop set out to beautify the garden. They designed and built two garden benches, a fantastic kiosk and provided a huge mail box. The mail box will contain a Journal for garden visitors to record what they see on their garden visit, children's activity sheets, copies of the "The Butterflies of Howard County," information on Monarch Watch and a binder of "butterfly" facts. Chris will install a plaque recognizing the Boy Scout troop.

Also in June, Girl Scout Troop 2114 installed new garden art, beautiful stepping stones, and began creating new activity sheets for the Information Mailbox. Suzanne Klick began developing identification materials for the kiosk, Lan Reeser built a lovely stone watering oasis, and Rondalyn, well; she just continued to take pictures and pull weeds, just enjoying the beautiful surroundings.

In July 2011 the first display in the new kiosk was dedicated to Girl Scout Troop 261 and Troop 2114 with many thanks for caring for the garden and its butterflies. In July Troop 2114 decided to move on to other adventures and we are now looking for a new troop to carry on their wonderful work in the garden. In the mean time Rondalyn and Suzanne are busy working on butterfly fact sheets and plant photos to display in the kiosk. Suzanne is using her technology skills investigating ways for garden visitors to use their smart phone to access information sheets on insects from the Home and Garden Information Center.

Our goal is that visitors will become familiar with all the wonders the garden has to offer: the plants, the butterflies, the hummingbirds and the insects. We envision adults and children sitting on the garden benches observing nature at its finest, recording what they see in the garden Journal and making plans for their next visit!

In March 2012 we welcomed Waverly Elementary School fourth grade GS Junior Troop 1900 and their Girl Scout Leader Cathy Comegys. Cathy hopes she and her 15 girls can learn lots about butterflies, insects and flowers during their visits to the garden. Their first visit was on Earth Day April 21, 2012. The butterfly houses were removed, the girls spruce up the garden and planted new flowers. Also, the girls plan to make a WELCOME sign to hang on the gate to encourage visitors to venture inside. They put together children's Activity Sheets that were placed in the garden mailbox.

New to the garden in May 2013 is Daisy Troop SU#60, Troop #4880! Sheri Twambly, troop leader and Michelle Parker, co-leader, met with Rondalyn on May 14, 2013 to develop a plan for the girls to enjoy the garden. The troop is from Waterloo Elementary and the girls are ages 6 & 7.