



ELOISE BUTLER WILDFLOWER GARDEN AND BIRD SANCTUARY GARDEN HIGHLIGHTS

Phenology* notes for the weeks of September 1-14, 2019

September swirled in windily, with the crisp smell of fall. Days of steady drizzle have continued the trend of the wettest year yet across the United States, accumulating 3 inches in Minneapolis already, over twice the average amount.

As day length rapidly shortens, flowers slow their blooming activity. The stars of this season are now all onstage, where they will soak in the slanting autumn light until the Garden rests. The boardwalk, awash in color, weaves through bold hues of great blue lobelia, bright red cardinal flower, and yellow sprays of goldenrod. Begin around the bend by the back gate, where a sea of red turtlehead gulps up bumblebees and spits them out again full of pollen. You will end in a yellow-orange ocean of pale jewelweed and spotted touch-me-not. In between, tall clumps of red-stemmed aster lean in, lavender petals fringing yellow centers. Ontario aster packs flower heads along its stems, as if embroidered with bright white buttons. Flat-topped aster holds umbrellas over the shorter pink spikes of obedient plant. Near the gathering place bench, a patch of nodding bur marigold glows gold, and swamp thistle stands tall like sticky pink sentinels. Look for the last painted lady and monarch butterflies perched on the sweet, fading blooms of Joe Pye weed. Swamp and devil's beggartick offer pollen from their humble orangey blooms. Littler flowers tuck in along the edges: dotted smartweed sprays gracefully up from wet areas, and arrowleaved tearthumb's tiny white bunches are turning pink to match nearby lady's thumb. In the quiet woodland, white snakeroot, zig-zag goldenrod, and bigleaf aster glow in the green. Fall in the upland makes way for an array of asters. New England aster is the showiest, flashing magenta rays around yellow centers. Panicked aster spreads out full bouquets of wide, white blooms, while calico aster is dotted with the daintiest white flowers. Heath aster also blooms white but can be distinguished by its uniquely small leaves, like sprigs of rosemary. Other fall favorites newly blooming include the gentians: low to the ground, bottle gentian catches the eye with an unusual shade of blue, while pale gentian blends in with creamy white. Scarlet gaura arches delicately; each bloom lasts only a day, darkening from white in the morning to salmon in the afternoon. Showy goldenrod sports spikes of extra-large starry yellow flowers. Stiff sunflower and tall coreopsis join the waving fields of other yellow composites, and many others continue to bloom.

Migrants are on the move! Warblers are passing through Garden this month on their way to their winter home in the tropics. Birders have been studying up on their fall plumage in order to pick them out from flocks of other small birds like chickadees. Those seen so far include black and white, golden-winged, Nashville, chestnut-sided, Blackburnian, black-throated green warblers and American redstart. The wetlands outside the Garden are full of waterfowl: mallards, wood ducks, and Canada geese have been dabbling in large groups. Broad-winged hawks kettle overhead; this is also the time for raptor migration. Regular birds still in the area include ruby-throated hummingbird, great-crested and olive-sided flycatchers, rose-breasted grosbeak, and green heron. Two barred owls were heard carrying on a conversation this week.

The snapping turtle eggs laid near the parking lot this summer hatched on Saturday! Watch out for baby turtles crossing the road as you park your car, and keep your eyes out for tiny dinosaurs trundling over the Garden paths. If you find a turtle in a dangerous location, you can assist it by moving it out of the way of traffic in the direction it is traveling.

For more information about tours, a full list of currently blooming plants, or answers to questions about phenology you have observed in your area, talk to a volunteer or naturalist on duty in the Visitor Shelter.

**Phenology: The study of periodic biological phenomena such as flowering, breeding and migration especially as related to climate.*

Prepared by Naturalist Kyla Sisson 09/14/2019