Revitalized Jubilee College Butterfly Garden Used to Educate Public About Pollinators

In 2013, University of Illinois Extension Master Gardeners in the Fulton-Mason-Peoria-Tazewell Unit took on the project of revitalizing the Butterfly Garden at Jubilee College Historic Site. The garden has been used since that time to help educate both site visitors and students enrolled in continuing education classes at Bradley University.

U of I Extension volunteer Patricia Melaik is both a Master Gardener and Master Naturalist. She spearheaded the project. Melaik describes how the support of the Master Gardener program in cooperation with other Jubilee volunteer groups, the Illinois Historic Preservation Program and Mike Carter, the Site Manager for Jubilee College Historic Site, have contributed to the success of this project.

Four special events and tours were held during May and June 2016. A total of 226 people visited the grounds during the special events. Twelve additional people dropped by during one of the five Master Gardener Butterfly Garden work days that have been held so far this summer. Of those, Master Gardeners and Master Naturalists have educated approximately 93 at the butterfly garden. The education included answering visitor questions, offering educational handouts about growing a pollinator garden, as well as providing information on plant labels. One handout provided to garden visitors, Providing a Place for Pollinators, can be found online at https://web.extension.illinois.edu/dkk/downloads/60043.pdf

Melaik was also a member of the team that taught the History of Jubilee College course at the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Bradley University (OLLI). Twenty people enrolled in the class. It included a lesson about the butterfly garden, taught by Melaik. Two OLLI staff and some of the course participants were able to attend one of the garden tours held in May.

Melaik and The Friends of Jubilee College committee are gearing up for their second annual open house, “Jubilee—The Jewel in Your Backyard.” scheduled for August 6th. In 2015, the open house attracted 425 visitors.

In addition to these direct teaching opportunities, The Friends of Jubilee College Historic Site have started a Facebook page. To date, they have 55 followers. The Master Gardeners use it to promote the special events and provide education about the butterflies spotted in the garden and plants in bloom.

“As on a good, sunny day, we have seen anywhere between eight and ten species of butterflies and some caterpillars,” Melaik mentioned.