

# IDEAS

THE NEWSLETTER OF *Partnerships for Parks*

fall 2004

## IF YOU PLANT IT...

PARK GROUPS SEEKING TO GENERATE NEW INTEREST find that gardens can be an attractive lure. Organizations including Homegrown in Brooklyn, the Friends of Kissena Park in Queens, and an array of park groups in Manhattan's Highbridge Park are putting their gardens to work.

**ATTRACTING VISITORS:** For Nancy and Brian Dennigan, the brother-sister duo that started the Brooklyn park group Homegrown, the plantings in their park serve as evidence of their stewardship and an open invitation to visitors. Brian recalls the founding of the group in 1999, "Our priority was to make people realize that the park at 18th street is not an abandoned park. It's part of a community that cares for it." After he and more than a dozen others hauled away 65 bags of litter, few have doubted it. By mowing, fencing, and cleaning, Homegrown created an attractive view for motorists passing by. But it wasn't until they planted a butterfly garden at the center of the park that they began to attract visitors: monarch butterflies, sparrows, and people who come with their coffee, their newspapers, and their strollers. For them the park isn't just a pretty plot of land to glance at out the window, it's a place to spend time.

**INSPIRING STEWARDS:** Kissena Park in Queens is crowded with visitors, and Beverly McDermott is determined to turn as many as she can into gardeners. She describes her work as "sowing the seeds of inspiration." She makes herself visible in the park and keeps busy tending plants. When



Cathrine Guimond

people stop by, she welcomes their curiosity and their help. She notes that, "Because they see you actually doing the work, people will ask you questions." McDermott has shared seeds and suggestions, and she'll find a task for anyone who wants to lend a hand. Sensing the need for a new generation of greenthumbs, she

## DEAR FRIENDS,

HAVE YOU NOTICED the city's remarkable diversity of flora? This spring and summer the boroughs were in bloom with more flowers and trees than ever before. They made the city a cooler, more fragrant, and even a more joyful place to live. Instinct tells us that flowers lift our spirits and science confirms it. In a 2001 study by Rutgers University, as many as 81% of senior citizens reported an easing of depression when they had contact with flowers. Parks & Recreation and City Parks Foundation are able to populate the city with these natural antidepressants because a network of generous individuals volunteer their time planting, watering, pruning, and watching over the transformation from bulb to bud. You know who you are. You turn our parks into gardens and our blues into pinks and yellows. Your work benefits us all, and we thank you.

Sincerely,  
Adrian Benepe, Commissioner,  
Parks & Recreation  
David Rivel, Executive Director,  
City Parks Foundation



Malcolm Pirckney

itself,” explains Nicole Smith, Manhattan Outreach Coordinator for Partnerships for Parks. To that end, volunteers are creating trails and lookout points that invite users into the park’s wilderness areas. On National Trails Day for two years running, a team of volunteers has worked with Parks’ district staff and Natural Resources Group specialists to cut away weeds and to outline a path that takes hikers from 158th

Administrator for North Manhattan Parks, initiated the restoration of the park’s natural areas six years ago with early Parks partner New York Restoration Project (NYRP). Over the years, NYRP has continued its significant work removing debris and cleaning and planting the park’s interior, and groups as diverse as the Friends of Highbridge Park, East River Crew, Alianza Dominicana, and the High Bridge Coalition have

would have been surrounded by weeds six feet high. Today it is native trees that tower overhead. Millie Seubert, of the Friends of Highbridge Park, and volunteers from New York Cares have weeded, mulched, and planted every year to ensure that native plants from shad-bush to red oak grow back fuller and stronger, evoking the natural history of the park, and inviting visitors into its depths.

and the other members of the Friends of Kissena Park teach horticulture to children from the Flushing Christian Day School. The students, who check on their flowers every gym class, are so enthusiastic that they’ve asked to plant another garden on school grounds. One packet of seeds, one lesson at a time, the Friends of Kissena Park are planting gardeners.

**DRAWING ATTENTION TO UNDER-USED AREAS:** In Highbridge Park, a Partnerships for Parks Catalyst site, the creation of gardens and trails is calling attention to those parts of the park that might otherwise be overlooked. “Through the Catalyst program, we want to encourage use of the entire park and ultimately connect people to the High Bridge

## The strategic use of gardening can encourage new kinds of activity in your park.

Street to 174th Street along the route of the Old Croton Aqueduct. At 174th Street hikers are rewarded with an expansive view of the Hudson and a rest stop in a flourishing native plant landscape. Jane Schachat,

extended the effort. Schachat reflects, “It is only through countless volunteer hours that we’ve been able to show that these are beautiful natural areas with real value.” Indeed six years ago hikers at 174th Street

Whether the aim is to bring more visitors into a park, to inspire stewardship, or to increase use of a particular neglected area, the strategic use of gardening can encourage new kinds of activity in your park. 🌱



Dana Molina

Hunts Point, where 23% of young people suffer from asthma and 10,000 trucks drive by on given day, is a natural place to put the theory into practice. “If people don’t see it happening, they believe it isn’t possible,” says Elena Conte of Greening for Breathing. With the active participation of neighborhood residents, the project partners have inventoried all 889 street trees in Hunts Point, identified 699 potential tree planting sites, recruited property owners and residents to act as stewards, and established planting priorities. Three quarters of the way through their first year of implementation, they are ahead of their planting goal, Conte affirms, “We’re demonstrating that trees can be planted and survive.” 🌱



### FROM THE GARDENER’S TOOL SHED

IF YOU WANT to keep your garden lively year round, consider planting a garden for all seasons. Asters and Virginia knotweed, both native plants, flower in autumn, as do Japanese anemones and chrysanthemums. Closer to the sky, Franklinia and crape myrtle trees also flower each fall. Try leaving ornamental seedheads on bee balm, grasses, globe thistle and other summer flowering plants in order to add shape, color and movement to your winter garden, or plant evergreens such as English ivy, cottonwood, and rose of Sharon.

### TREES TO TREAT ASTHMA IN HUNTS POINT

Throughout the Hunts Point section of the Bronx, a connection is being made between trees and air quality as Parks & Recreation and Greening for Breathing roll out a five-year forestry management plan to improve air quality through the planting and stewardship of trees. Fiona Watt, Chief of Central Forestry for Parks & Recreation explains, “There is an emerging consensus in the field that increasing tree canopy will lessen air pollution issues. From a policy perspective, you have to start linking trees and public health.”



A SINGLE ACRE of forest takes in six tons of carbon dioxide and puts out four tons of oxygen, enough to sustain 18 people for one year, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

**For an introduction to tree care** and a permit to steward street trees and greenstreets in your neighborhood, contact Partnerships for Parks and ask about stewardship training for young trees and greenstreets. It’s a two-hour course that will give you everything you need to start looking after the vulnerable plants outside your door. For the next scheduled training, please call our technical assistance hotline at (212) 360-8180.

**Trees New York** certifies citizens to monitor and prune trees every year. In a twelve-hour course, students learn the rudiments of tree biology, tree identification, tree pruning, and tree pit gardening. They leave the course licensed to care for trees all over New York City. To register or to learn more, call (212) 227-1887 or visit [www.treesny.com](http://www.treesny.com).

**Gardens registered with GreenThumb** can receive valuable technical assistance and tools of the trade. To register your garden, call (212) 788-8070 for an appointment. Registered gardens will be eligible for an educational workshop and a bag of bulbs at this fall’s Great Bulb Giveaway. For information on the logistics and benefits of GreenThumb membership, visit [www.greenthumbnyc.org](http://www.greenthumbnyc.org)

Your next opportunity to **train to be a citizen steward** is around the corner. Salt Marsh Ecology 101 is scheduled for October 27 from 7:00 to 9:00 p.m. and October 30 from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. At this two-day event you’ll get both a theoretical and a hands-on introduction to salt marsh restoration. To register, please call (212) 360-8180.

**City Parks Foundation’s Learning Gardens** program, which promotes development of community gardens, is hosting a fall event in Grove Hill Community Playground. To get involved, come out on Saturday, October 23 between 1:00 and 4:00 p.m. Stop by 158th Street and Eagle Avenue in the Bronx or call Angela Hadwin at (212) 360-2744 for more information.

**Free trees are available** from Friends of Gateway. Species include weeping willow, gray birch, spruce, cedar, rosa rugosa, and bayberry. Please call (212) 228-3126 for details.

**Halloween events** abound in parks this October. To find out about a fun Halloween happening in a park near you, visit [www.nyc.gov/parks](http://www.nyc.gov/parks) or call 311.

### It’s My Park! Day

A record number of over 210 groups registered at 194 parks for It’s My Park! Day, a day of planting, cleaning and community building, on Saturday, October 16, 2004. For more information on how you can get involved in future It’s My Park! Days, visit [www.itsmypark.org](http://www.itsmypark.org) or call 311.

Special thanks to sponsors: Gillette, Skin Cancer Foundation, International Bulb Company, Snapple; and media partners: The New York Times, The New York Observer, WB11 and WBLS.



## How to reach us

[www.partnershipsforparks.org](http://www.partnershipsforparks.org)

[www.nyc.gov/parks](http://www.nyc.gov/parks)

[www.CityParksFoundation.org](http://www.CityParksFoundation.org)

To contact Partnerships for Parks and for information on volunteering in parks, call (212) 360-1357 or call the City's non-emergency hotline, 311.



PARTNERSHIPS FOR PARKS works to increase community support for and involvement in parks throughout New York City. Founded in 1995, Partnerships works to start, strengthen, and support neighborhood park groups; to link these groups together so that they can learn from each other and become stronger collectively; and to promote involvement in parks so people will join in efforts to restore and preserve them.

Michael R. Bloomberg, Mayor  
City of New York

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Parks & Recreation

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City Parks Foundation

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# LEAFLET

THE NEWSLETTER OF Partnerships for Parks, A JOINT PROGRAM OF CITY PARKS FOUNDATION AND THE NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF PARKS & RECREATION

fall 2004

## GRANT OPPORTUNITY

### FUNDS FOR YOUNG GARDENERS

If your group gardens with young people between the ages of 3 and 18, you may be eligible for a grant from the National Gardening Association. The association funds non-profits that engage children and improve quality of life through the creation and maintenance of gardens. For deadlines, call 1-800-538-7476 or visit [www.kidsgardening.com/grants.asp](http://www.kidsgardening.com/grants.asp)



## ASIAN LONGHORNED BEETLE

As the Asian Longhorned Beetle continues to infest hardwood trees in New York City and beyond, citizens are asked to keep an eye out for this shiny black insect which bears white spots and long antennae. The beetle may leave dime-sized holes as it exits a tree or coarse sawdust, which is created by beetle larvae boring into the tree. Recent infestations have occurred in Bedford Stuyvesant, Brooklyn; Long Island City, Queens; and in Manhattan at 64th Street and Third Avenue and in Central Park. To volunteer to search for infestation in these areas, call Partnerships for Parks at (212) 360-8180. And to help stem the spread of the Asian Longhorned Beetle throughout the city, please report all evidence of the beetle to 1-877-STOP-ALB or to 311.



USDA/APHIS

Attention: For address corrections call (212) 360-1357

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