

**Northern Plains  
Botanic Garden Society**



**2024  
Annual Report**

## ***PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE***

Make-believe.

No red pills, no blue pills. I'm not saying this is the *best* thing about gardens, but it is a pretty great thing about gardens. When we set foot in these spaces, geopolitical concern is displaced by geopeaceful contemplation. We notice the bees and the birds and admire the incredible diversity of plants and pollinators in these brilliant life-sustaining, peace-encouraging ecosystems that emerge every season here at NPBGS, across the northern plains, and around the world.

"Geopeaceful"? I just made that up. I was ruminating for a word to contrast with geopolitical and that's what rolled off the keys. It turns out, you can just make things up! And it turns out, you can just try things. Have a good look around in whatever space you find yourself in while reading this and realize that most of what is surrounding you was, probably not that long ago, merely a spark of imagination – someone somewhere on Earth thought it up, believed it could or should exist, and made it – and that, friends, is *make-believe* in a nutshell. The best part is that this kind of creativity is available to everyone, all the time.

The Northern Plains Botanic Garden Society is proud of our efforts to create and maintain these publicly accessible botanic gardens as a destination for connection, and as a respite for times when seeking solitude strikes you, too. The creativity of our gardeners and garden planning committee shines through each of the uniquely designed spaces.

We stand on the shoulders of a great many industrious volunteers, generous donors, society members, and visionaries that have sustained and grown this organization for more than a quarter of a century and owe a debt of gratitude to all. We also, of course, invite the public's continued support. Your visits, whether frequent, once per year, or even virtually via our online presence and virtual reality tour, help to demonstrate the value NPBGS brings to the community. Spreading the news to family and friends also helps. And we invite all to consider joining as a supporting member. Last year, I wrote that I *believe* we can double our membership base, and then double it again, twice. It bears repeating. :) Let's *make* it so.

For yours truly, it has been a tremendous privilege to serve this society for back-to-back terms the past six years, and a very humbling experience to learn from many who have been serving and sustaining the organization for much longer than that. Some of the best moments and memories are simply the encounters with visitors to the gardens, and the spontaneous conversations that flowed from seemingly chance meetings. All was made possible because late last century, Dr. Chiwon Lee *believed* in such a space, and *made* it come into existence, right here in Fargo.

~ Thank you ~

Matt Sorenson, President



## Northern Plains Botanic Garden Society

## Profit &amp; Loss

January through December 2024

	Jan - Dec 24
<b>Ordinary Income/Expense</b>	
<b>Income</b>	
4340 · Direct Public Support	
4342 · Foundation/Grants	7,000.00
4344 · Japanese Garden Fund	12,330.00
4345 · Business Contributions	2,311.05
4347 · Annual Membership Dues	6,270.00
4348 · Memorials	1,335.00
4349 · Donations	12,450.61
<b>Total 4340 · Direct Public Support</b>	41,696.66
4500 · Investments	
4503 · Interest-Savings, Short-term CD	1,273.59
<b>Total 4500 · Investments</b>	1,273.59
4720 · Program Income	
4724 · West Acres Vendor Fees	8,400.00
4726 · West Acres Contract	14,000.00
4730 · Events - Ticket Sales	6,155.00
4731 · Events - Revenue	
4731-1 · Non taxable Sales	3,262.39
4731-2 · Taxable Sales	10,868.83
<b>Total 4731 · Events - Revenue</b>	14,131.22
4732 · Events - Sponsorships	2,350.00
4733 · Events - Donations	2,065.88
4734 · Expanded Fundraising	7,725.00
<b>Total 4720 · Program Income</b>	54,827.10
4990 · Gifts in Kind - Goods	1,947.00
<b>Total Income</b>	99,744.35
<b>Cost of Goods Sold</b>	
5000 · Cost of Goods Sold	254.99
<b>Total COGS</b>	254.99
<b>Gross Profit</b>	99,489.36
<b>Expense</b>	
5990 · Inkind expense	1,947.00
6090 · Business Expenses	
6095 · Dues & Subscriptions	570.00
<b>Total 6090 · Business Expenses</b>	570.00
6210 · Contract Services	
6211 · Accounting Fees	2,070.00
6213 · Outside Contract Services	41,647.14
6214 · Workforce Safety Insurance	250.00
<b>Total 6210 · Contract Services</b>	43,967.14
6280 · Facilities and Equipment	
6284 · Garden Equip Rent & Maint	2,324.08
6288 · Bldg Repairs & Maintenance	1,269.20
6289 · Rent, Parking, Utilities	3,562.94
<b>Total 6280 · Facilities and Equipment</b>	7,156.22
6300 · Information Technology	
6321 · Stripe	108.13
6322 · Square fee	235.09
6330 · Website	384.00
6340 · Hardware/Software	296.88

## Northern Plains Botanic Garden Society

## Profit &amp; Loss

01/16/25

January through December 2024

Accrual Basis

	<u>Jan - Dec 24</u>
Total 6300 · Information Technology	1,024.10
<b>6400 · Program Expenses</b>	
6410 · Events - Supplies	1,680.41
6415 · Events - Food	2,672.20
6418 · Events - Other Expenses	5,912.51
6420 · Public Relations & Advertising	4,519.07
6430 · West Acres Project Expenses	0.00
6440 · Gardening Expenses	11,621.82
6445 · Japanese Garden Expense	6,122.09
6450 · Signage	707.41
<b>Total 6400 · Program Expenses</b>	<b>33,235.51</b>
<b>6500 · Operations</b>	
6502 · Postage, Mailing Service	293.58
6503 · Printing and Copying	5,112.46
6504 · Supplies	675.90
6506 · Bank Service Charges	18.00
6507 · Insurance - Liability, D and O	3,030.00
<b>Total 6500 · Operations</b>	<b>9,129.94</b>
<b>6510 · Other Types of Expenses</b>	
6516 · Other Costs	0.00
<b>Total 6510 · Other Types of Expenses</b>	<b>0.00</b>
<b>6830 · Travel and Meetings</b>	
6831 · Conference, Convention, Meeting	575.25
6832 · Travel	453.06
<b>Total 6830 · Travel and Meetings</b>	<b>1,028.31</b>
<b>9999 · Credit Card Fees</b>	<b>38.21</b>
<b>Total Expense</b>	<b>98,096.43</b>
<b>Net Ordinary Income</b>	<b>1,392.93</b>
<b>Net Income</b>	<b>1,392.93</b>

**Northern Plains Botanic Garden Society**  
**Balance Sheet Curr Yr Prev Year**  
As of December 31, 2024

	Dec 31, 24	Dec 31, 23
<b>ASSETS</b>		
<b>Current Assets</b>		
<b>Checking/Savings</b>		
1110 · Bell State Checking	18,575.03	25,037.69
1111 · Petty Cash	205.00	114.00
<b>1120 · Bell State Money Market Savings</b>		
1121 · Restricted Savings		
1122 · Japanese Garden Fund	14,028.45	1,852.44
<b>Total 1121 · Restricted Savings</b>	14,028.45	1,852.44
1140 · Savings Unrestricted	14,481.47	13,981.47
1120 · Bell State Money Market Savings - Other	32,873.40	35,999.20
<b>Total 1120 · Bell State Money Market Savings</b>	61,383.32	51,833.11
1135 · Martha Lee Mem. Fund, Alerus CD	4,450.64	4,312.08
<b>Total Checking/Savings</b>	84,613.99	81,296.88
<b>Other Current Assets</b>		
1490 · Undeposited Funds	405.00	0.00
<b>Total Other Current Assets</b>	405.00	0.00
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	85,018.99	81,296.88
<b>Fixed Assets</b>		
1212 · Depreciation	-21,036.00	-17,530.00
1500 · Furniture and Equipment	52,590.00	52,590.00
<b>Total Fixed Assets</b>	31,554.00	35,060.00
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>116,572.99</b>	<b>116,356.88</b>
<b>LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>		
<b>Liabilities</b>		
<b>Current Liabilities</b>		
<b>Other Current Liabilities</b>		
2290 · ND Sales Tax	814.18	0.00
<b>Total Other Current Liabilities</b>	814.18	0.00
<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>	814.18	0.00
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	814.18	0.00
<b>Equity</b>		
3000 · Opening Balance Equity	-570.00	-570.00
3200 · Unrestricted Net Assets	116,926.88	202,584.70
Net Income	-598.07	-85,657.82
<b>Total Equity</b>	115,758.81	116,356.88
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>	<b>116,572.99</b>	<b>116,356.88</b>

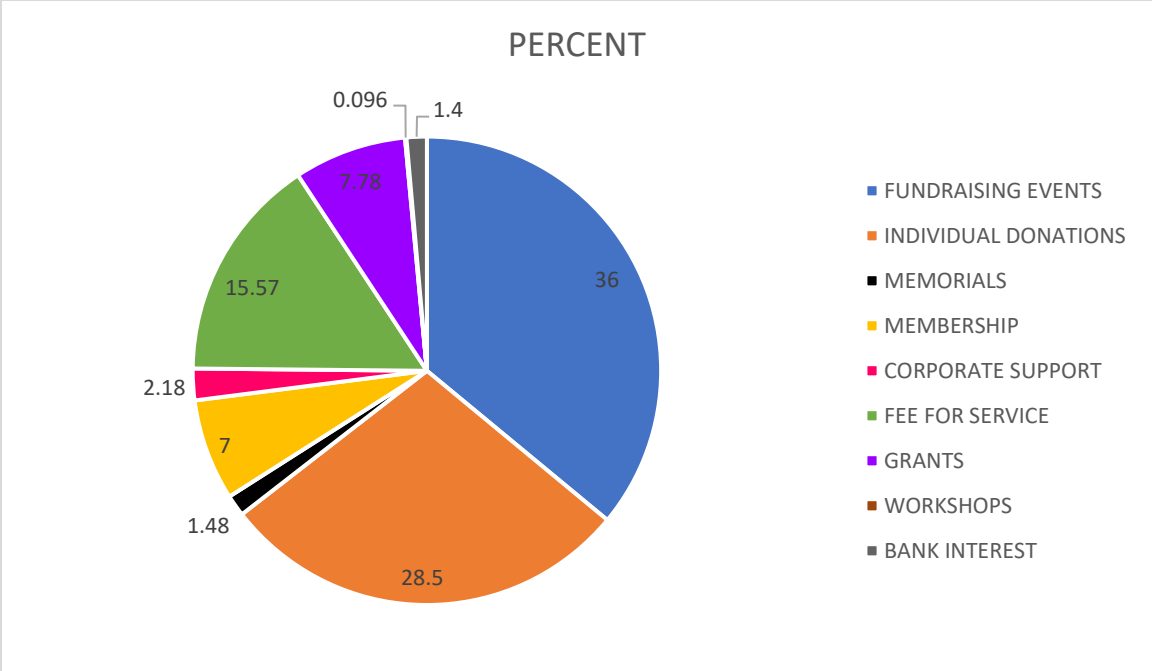
**Northern Plains Botanic Garden Society**  
**Balance Sheet Curr Yr Prev Year**  
 As of December 31, 2024

	\$ Change
<b>ASSETS</b>	
<b>Current Assets</b>	
<b>Checking/Savings</b>	
1110 · Bell State Checking	-6,462.66
1111 · Petty Cash	91.00
<b>1120 · Bell State Money Market Savings</b>	
1121 · Restricted Savings	
1122 · Japanese Garden Fund	12,176.01
<b>Total 1121 · Restricted Savings</b>	12,176.01
1140 · Savings Unrestricted	500.00
1120 · Bell State Money Market Savings - Other	-3,125.80
<b>Total 1120 · Bell State Money Market Savings</b>	9,550.21
1135 · Martha Lee Mem. Fund, Alerus CD	138.56
<b>Total Checking/Savings</b>	3,317.11
<b>Other Current Assets</b>	
1490 · Undeposited Funds	405.00
<b>Total Other Current Assets</b>	405.00
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	3,722.11
<b>Fixed Assets</b>	
1212 · Depreciation	-3,506.00
1500 · Furniture and Equipment	0.00
<b>Total Fixed Assets</b>	-3,506.00
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>216.11</b>
<b>LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>	
<b>Liabilities</b>	
<b>Current Liabilities</b>	
<b>Other Current Liabilities</b>	
2290 · ND Sales Tax	814.18
<b>Total Other Current Liabilities</b>	814.18
<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>	814.18
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	814.18
<b>Equity</b>	
3000 · Opening Balance Equity	0.00
3200 · Unrestricted Net Assets	-85,657.82
Net Income	85,059.75
<b>Total Equity</b>	-598.07
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>	<b>216.11</b>

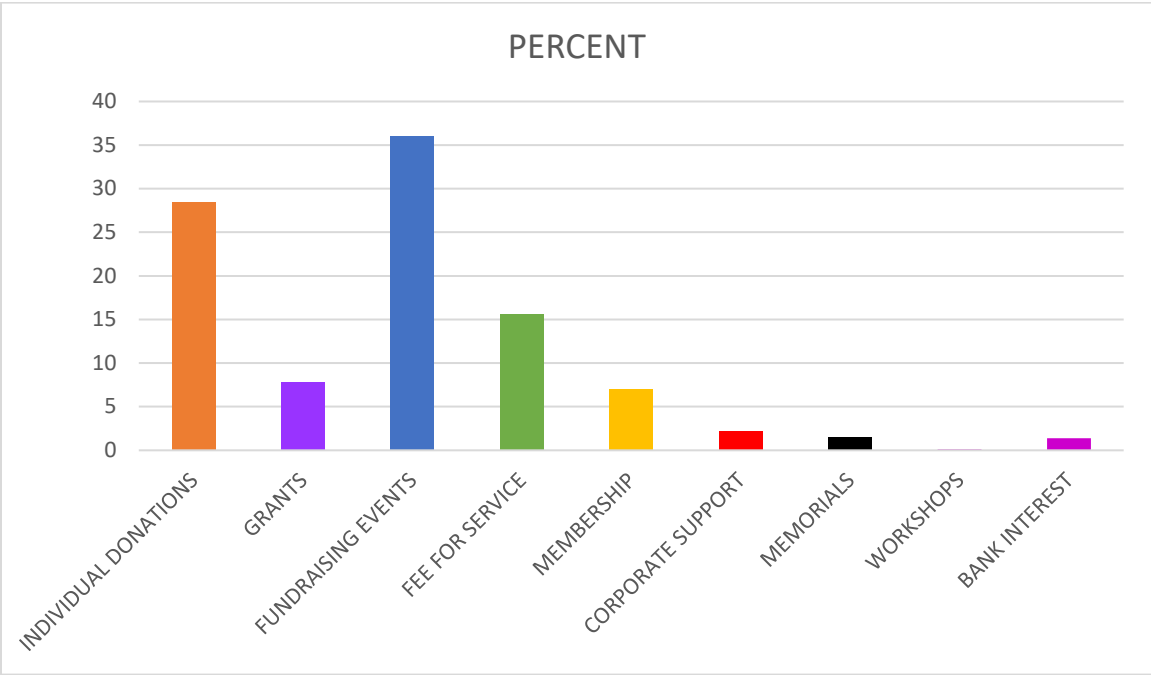
## FINANCE

Our fundraising efforts this year included the *Tea Time with Flowers* on February 10<sup>th</sup>, the *Spring Plant Sale* on May 11<sup>th</sup>, the *Scarecrows in the Garden* event on September 14<sup>th</sup>, and the weekly Northern Plains Farmers Market at West Acres that is held annually from mid- June through October. We appealed for donor support via social media, e-mails, and our Fall Newsletter. The West Acres Landscapes Contract and The Market at West Acres provide NPBGS with additional support income throughout the year. We thank everyone who contributed their time, talent, and treasure to NPBGS. This list summarizes our 2024 income sources.

	<b>Net Dollars</b>
<b>Fundraising Events:</b>	
<i>Tea Time with Flowers</i>	5,800.78
<i>Spring Plant Sale</i>	6,517.35
<i>West Acres Market Vendor Booth Fees</i>	8,400.00
<i>The Market at West Acres: NPBGS Booth Sales</i>	1,809.53
<i>Scarecrows in the Garden</i>	2,594.17
<i>Red River Valley Garden Tour: NPBGS selected as charity</i>	7,225.00
<b>Total Net Dollars, Fundraising Events:</b>	<b>32,346.83</b>
<b>Bonsai Workshop:</b>	<b>86.16</b>
<b>Individual Donations:</b>	
Individual Donations:	13,305.61
Individual Donations, Japanese Garden Fund:	12,330.00
<b>Total Individual Donations, Direct Solicitations:</b>	<b>25,635.61</b>
<b>Memorial Donations:</b>	<b>1335.00</b>
<b>Memberships:</b>	<b>6,270.00</b>
<b>Corporate Support:</b>	
Microsoft Corporation: <i>Employee Match Program</i>	1,211.05
Thrivent Financial: <i>Employee Match Program</i>	250.00
Fargo Junk Market: <i>Charity of Choice, NPBGS</i>	500.00
<b>Total Corporate Support:</b>	<b>1,961.05</b>
<b>West Acres Landscapes Project Fee for Service Contract:</b>	<b>14,000.00</b>
<b>Grants:</b>	
FM Area Foundation, general operating support	4,000.00
Alex Stern Family Foundation, general operating support	2,000.00
William & Anna Jane Schlossman Fund, FM Area Foundation, gift grant	1,000.00
<b>Total Grant Support</b>	<b>7,000.00</b>
<b>Total Net Income, Fundraising Efforts (excludes Bank Interest):</b>	<b>88,634.65</b>
<i>Japanese Garden Carryover Fund, Net:</i>	<i>14,835.22</i>



### NPBGs FUNDING INCOME IN 2024





## ***GARDEN AND OPERATIONS***

We have concluded another season with spectacular color displays throughout the garden. Thanks to our four paid gardeners, Lou, Gail, Don and Quin; assisted by volunteers Kim, Diana, Holly, Geetha, Lisa, Cindy, Mary, Vern, Jim, and Ruth who watered, weeded, dead-headed, fertilized and replanted throughout the season. This year both deer and a rampant rabbit population have been a challenge to even keeping plants available to bloom! Our gardens were further ravaged by the June flooding, requiring much replanting. The volunteer blue salvia seedlings – free plants! – were used to fill in our raised bed and bench garden near the



greenhouse, and they looked beautiful through the entire growing season.

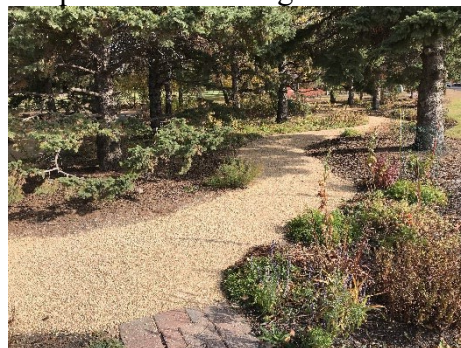
In addition to the regular garden maintenance, the crew developed and installed a secure donation box sign, which was combined with a sign board and a protective green roof topped by succulent plants to incorporate yet another “garden.” The donation box has proven to be a valuable addition, one that was actually requested by some of our garden visitors. Later the group created a new circular Herb Garden that includes medicinal, culinary and dye plants. A circular path was laid down inside the garden, with a center circle yet to be completed which will include a possible bench and sundial. Laurie Somerville and Denise Quick helped with the design and the selection of plants.

The Woodland Garden path was rebuilt using aggregate gravel consistent with all other garden paths, thanks to grant support from the FM Area Foundation and the hard labor of Lou Worner, Don DuBord, and Lisa Brown.



In October the garden crew replaced the sunken

blueberry bed with a new raised bed in the Edible Forest and they did intensive winterization preparation, which was supported in part by a grant from the Alex Stern Family Foundation.



In September, the Fargo Park District notified NPBGS that the big red beach house near the greenhouse would be demolished. This required relocating our stored garden accessories as well as our two storage sheds. After much discussion the smaller shed was relocated to the northeast wall outside of the greenhouse on the east patio. The larger shed was relocated near the sand box area outside the mini golf course, with the help of Fargo Park District employees and equipment. Demolition of the beach house was done by the Fargo Park District on October 17<sup>th</sup>.

We are sad to report that two of our contract gardeners, Lou Worner and Gail Wanek, will not return next year. Both Lou and Gail have done so much to make the gardens beautiful. Their garden knowledge, skills, and creativity will be sorely missed.

## Japanese Garden

It was another productive summer for the Japanese garden!

We began the planting phase, with a few shrubs and ground cover as budget permitted. On May 10<sup>th</sup>, eleven volunteers planted the north and west perimeter of the Japanese Garden with numerous trees and shrubs, including basswood, Norway Poplar, peachleaf willow, and flame willow, as a protective barrier. We submitted a grant proposal to the ND Forest Service for additional shrubs and trees to be planted in Summer, 2025. All planting follows the plan created by garden designer Sadafumi Uchiyama. We will need volunteers for tree planting, watering, and mulching, so contact NPBGS if you or your organization are interested.

We have also completed a zig-zag bridge, often found in Japanese Gardens.

We hope all visitors will walk carefully and slowly on the bridge and take time to pause and enjoy a new view at every turn as they walk among the irises. Our new bridge provides an opportunity to turn off the noise and embrace each new view for a fresh perspective. All can enjoy the bridge for what it is, and while they are there, appreciate the Japanese style wood joinery of mortise and tenon with no nails or metal connectors.



The bridge was constructed by Quin Segal, our newest contract worker.

[See photos of the construction process](#) of this bridge, which occurred August – October, 2024.



## Concord Grape Vine

The Concord grapevine (a hybrid of the native North American *Vitis labrusca* and the European *V. vinifera*) which grows on the pergola south of the greenhouse and has been infested by *Phylloxera*, which was first noticed in 2022. This aphid-like insect produces unsightly galls on the leaves and over-winters on the roots. This is the insect that almost wiped out the wine industry in Europe a few decades ago. The European grape rootstock does not tolerate the damage caused by *Phylloxera*, whereas New World grape rootstock can tolerate some damage without serious production decline. To reduce *Phylloxera* impacts, a weekly grapevine spraying regimen was started in 2024 by using Surround<sup>®</sup>WP, a kaolin clay solution, starting in the months of May and June. Kaolin clay is the same type of clay used to make chinaware and is considered an organic pesticide for insect control. Insect monitoring and Surround<sup>®</sup>WP sprayings will continue on the concord grapevines in 2025 as well as on the infested North Dakota bred grapevine variety, *Radiant*, which is located on the north side of the Edible Forest.

## Edible Forest

2024 was the 5th growing season for most of the plants in the Edible Forest, while there continue to be additions and some removals each year. The number of visitors appears to increase each year. We often hear very positive comments about the appearance of the orchard and the

enjoyment of fruit that visitors are able to sample (limited sampling encouraged, harvesting is only for staff for NPBGS support sales at the Farmer’s Market).

The orchard appearance does not improve by itself – that is largely due to excellent groundskeeping by staff and volunteers. In 2024, among other work, the pine bark mulch was replenished around the plants and fall watering was done when rainfall proved insufficient, both actions that will help the plants look and perform better going forward. While some of the shrubs and caneberries have been producing heavily for a few years, none of the plants are mature yet, so there is a lot of plant development to anticipate in coming years.

In terms of quantity, seedless and wine grapes, currants, aronia berry, and Nelson blackberry production were the highlight in 2024. There was good production of blueberries in the raised bed and of mulberries. There were some lowlights in 2024 as well. The extremely wet spring resulted in a weeks-long period of saturated soils. It appears that this resulted in a loss of all of the arctic beauty kiwi plants, just when some were established to the point of potentially growing over the top of the kiwi pergola. The sunken blueberry bed had standing water for weeks, and the plants there either died or barely survived. Raspberry production suffered due to the saturated soils. Several new and replacement plants were added: three chokecherry selections, two small chestnut trees, a Viktor arctic beauty kiwi, and a Mars seedless grapevine.

There were three public and five private group guided tours of the Edible Forest, one of which was a first when three shifts of about 30 each of pre-K through 8th graders toured the Edible Forest and the Children’s Garden. On May 4th there was a very popular demonstration of grapevine pruning by Greg Krieger – another first. In addition, the Edible Forest was the main topic of featured presentations at Gardening Saturday in Minot, ND in April and Midwest Outdoors in Moorhead, MN in November. For more information about the Edible Forest, please see Jim Walla’s [Edible Forest Report For 2024](#).

We have noted over time that the Edible Forest has been a habitat for visiting wildlife, including frogs seen by Jim Walla:



Cope’s gray tree frog showing its green tinge against a hazelnut leaf.

“As best I can tell, it's a Cope's gray tree frog. They can change color, depending on the background, which in this case is the green color of the leaf it's sitting on. This is the only tree frog species that has been found in recent studies in ND. I saw one in the Edible Forest this spring not too far from this one. They are very uncommon here, so to get to see two (or one twice) in the same year is pretty special. Dare I say almost as special as the Northern Plains Botanic Garden?”

- Jim Walla, August 19, 2024

## PROGRAMS AND EVENTS

### Public Events

NPBGS hosted its annual *Hina Matsuri* (Japanese Doll Festival) display at Fargo City Hall from February 1st – March 4<sup>th</sup>. The Japanese dolls were displayed on the first floor foyer entry. We thank Vern Hunter for coordinating and installing the display.



Our 26<sup>th</sup> *Annual Meeting* was held at the Fargo Air Museum on March 2<sup>nd</sup>. It was preceded by a Vendor Faire of 30 invited market vendors who opened our first *Annual Affaire* market at the Fargo Air Museum with food, beverages, art, and crafted items for sale.

Susan Curtis, collections manager for the [Emily Reynolds Historic Costume Collection at North Dakota State University](#), brought [Miss Okayama](#) to be exhibited in her display case before and during our keynote speaker's presentation. Our keynote speaker was Alan



Scott Pate who is a premier dealer and authority on antique Japanese dolls. He gave an excellent presentation on “[Japan Comes to North Dakota: Miss Okayama and the Friendship Dolls of 1927](#)”.



Vern Hunter was named *Member of the Year* for his “Outstanding Leadership, Vision, Talent, and Work for NPBGS and the Japanese Garden”, and he was awarded a plaque, a monetary gift from our Founder, Chiwon Lee, plus a Juniper Bonsai tree, and gift card.

Miss Okayama

Alan Scott Pate, Keynote Speaker

(See [2024 Spring Newsletter](#) and Annual Meeting Minutes at the end of this report for more details.)

We had a *Grape Vine Pruning Workshop* at the Edible Forest on May 4<sup>th</sup>. Jim Walla coordinated this workshop with Greg Krieger, past president of the ND Grape and Wine Association. Mr. Krieger led this demonstration workshop and he spoke about best practices for growing and maintaining grapevines in our region. About 24 people attended this workshop.



Greg Krieger, far right, speaking at workshop

Our first *Fairy Fest* was held on May 25th at the Northern Plains Botanic Garden and Yunker Farm Park. We co-hosted this event with the Fargo Park District. NPBGS sponsored a number of activities



including the Fairy Scavenger Hunt, Sidewalk Chalk Art, and Find Your Fairy Name, and the Fargo Park District provided Crafts in the Gazebo, Kite Flying, free Face Painting and Hair Tinsel, and free Fairy Wings. The Kids



greatly enjoyed the scavenger hunt and exploring the Fairy Garden and the Children's Garden. About 600 kids attended with their families and friends.

We hosted our second annual *Bonsai in the Garden* event on September 7th at the Japanese Garden and Greenhouse, which was attended by 32 people. Vern Hunter gave a brief walking tour of the Japanese Garden to show updated features, and Terry Adams spoke about the history and practice of Japanese ornamental rock display, or Suiseki. Audrey Gilbraith directed the bonsai workshop inside the greenhouse, where 11 participants practiced training Bougainvillea plants into various styles within small bonsai pots. Refreshments were provided by Vern Hunter, and over 20 bonsai trees were displayed on the greenhouse patio by bonsai enthusiasts.



Terry Adams giving a presentation on Suiseki

## Fundraising Events



NPBGS revived its annual Tea by hosting *Tea Time with Flowers* at El Zagal Shrine in north Fargo on February 10th. Our 150 guests enjoyed savory and sweet afternoon tea foods that were served by our volunteer table hosts and butlers. Our Botanic Garden Boutique, which included some unique art items, was a great success! This volunteer-intensive event involved more than 40 volunteers, including table hosts, butlers, floral arrangers, greeters, and boutique workers. We thank Ann Riley and the Tea Committee for coordinating this event.

Our annual *Spring Plant Sale* was held on May 11<sup>th</sup>. A diverse offering of flowering annuals, perennials, vegetable plants, and herbs were offered for sale and totaled 243 types of plants. NPBGS' Spring Plant Sale offers the public an additional shopping venue in north Fargo for seasonal plants, with experienced volunteers who provide useful gardening tips to the buyers. We thank Don DuBord, who organized and coordinated the plant sale, and the numerous volunteers and plant donors.

Our fourth annual *Scarecrows in the Garden & Fall Market* event was held on September 14<sup>th</sup>.



Numerous custom crafted scarecrows were created and donated for display and sale at the Northern Plains Botanic Garden. The Fall Market included numerous donated baked goods, jams, plants, seasonal fall décor, handcrafts, and pumpkins. [Heart -n- Soul Community Café](#) joined us again this year and served delicious harvest bowls and other hearty lunch options to attendees. Kids were able to create sidewalk chalk art, participate in an Orphan Scarecrow Doll scavenger hunt, and play a “Go Fish!” game. (Photo Credits: Dennis Krull)

## ***PUBLIC RELATIONS***



### **Tours & Outreach**

Our Board hosted Mr. Masaru Aoki, a Japanese Doll Artisan of the Yoshitoku Dolls Company, for his return visit to the Northern Plains Botanic Garden, and the Japanese Garden, on July 31<sup>st</sup>. Mr. Aoki was in Fargo to do doll restoration work on Miss Okayama, NDSU's Japan Friendship Doll. Mr. Aoki was part of the JACES delegation who gifted NPBGS our Hina matsuri Doll collection in 2013. Board Members Julia Schott, Bee Mittleider, Barbara Villella, and Marissa Gapp gave the tour, along with Ann Braaten, who

is the past curator of the Emily Reynolds Collection at NDSU and a colleague of Aoki-San. (Photo Credit: Dennis Krull)

We hosted our 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual *Fall Frost Flower Harvest* for [Hope Blooms](#) on October 14<sup>th</sup>. Nine Hope Blooms volunteers enjoyed visiting the botanic garden when they harvested annual and perennial flowers, which they use in their small bouquets of re-purposed flowers that they create and give to those in our community in need of kindness, hope, and comfort.

Hope Blooms Volunteers





Jim Walla hosted three public Edible Forest Tours on June 27<sup>th</sup>, July 20<sup>th</sup>, and August 22<sup>nd</sup>. These two-hour tours served about 25 adults, combined. In addition, he hosted five private group tours.

Jim Walla showing the map of the Edible Forest to group (Photo Credit: Dennis Krull)

Ruth Morton hosted the FM Arts Club on June 24<sup>th</sup> and the Fiber Arts Knitting Group on July 13<sup>th</sup>. Both groups held their meetings at the grapevine pergola and were able to tour the botanic garden with Ruth.

Fiber Arts Knitting Group, July 13<sup>th</sup> meeting



NPBGS and Jim Walla hosted three large tour groups of students from Grace Lutheran School on September 9<sup>th</sup>. The staggered tours were over a 4 hour period, and kids stayed at the botanic garden for a picnic lunch. We thank Jim for giving multiple tours of the botanic garden and the Edible Forest to these energetic children!



Lisa Brown gave a tour of the botanic garden and Japanese Garden to NDSU Horticulture & Forestry Club on October 1<sup>st</sup>. The students were interested in the history and development of the botanic garden, and some expressed interest in potential intern opportunities. A few expressed interest in working in public gardens in the future. Twenty-five people attended, including their club advisor, Dr. Todd West.

NDSU Hort & Forestry Club checks grapevines, Edible Forest

NPBGS was privileged to be one of the gardens on the Red River Valley Garden Tour on July 17<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup>. Close to 500 people went on the tour of the six gardens. NPBGS had an information table and promoted the botanic garden and NPBGS. Our organization was the named beneficiary of the tour's net proceeds for which we are very grateful to the Red River Valley Garden Tour.

## Promotional Booths

NPBGS hosted three promotional booths in the spring, at: Fargo Junk Market, Red River Valley Fairgrounds Butler Building, March 23<sup>rd</sup>; Earth Day, Minnesota State University Moorhead, April 20<sup>th</sup>; and Yard & Garden Palooza, Shanley High School, Fargo, April 27<sup>th</sup>. We were the *Charity of Choice* at the Fargo Junk Market, which donated part of their net proceeds to NPBGS, plus attendees' free will cash donations.

Maddysen Boecker at our Earth Day Booth, MSUM



## Presentations

Jim Walla gave a presentation at the Gardening Saturday Event in Minot on April 13<sup>th</sup>. He spoke about the Edible Forest and the Northern Plains Botanic Garden. Vern Hunter was the guest speaker at the FM AM Rotary Club meeting on May 30<sup>th</sup>. He spoke about the Northern Plains Botanic Garden and the Japanese Garden project. About 20 people attended. Jim Walla was the guest speaker at the Midwest Outdoors LLC's *Nature Night* event on November 3<sup>rd</sup>. He spoke to about 15 people about the Edible Forest and NPBGS. Ann Riley spoke to the Cass County Area Retired Teachers Association on November 14<sup>th</sup> about NPBGS, our fundraising efforts, and the botanic garden. About 30 people attended.

## Market at West Acres

NPBGS participated in a number of Saturday market days at the [Northern Plains Market at West Acres](#), a seasonal farmers market at West Acres. In addition to our booth sales, we promoted the market, NPBGS membership, the botanic garden, the Japanese Garden, and upcoming NPBGS events. Maddysen Boecker, Matt Sorenson, Marissa Gapp, Lou Worner, Don DuBord, Lisa Brown, Julia Schott, and Bee Mittleider helped with this hybrid fundraising and promotional effort.



Marissa, Matt, and Bee at The Market on June 22<sup>nd</sup>



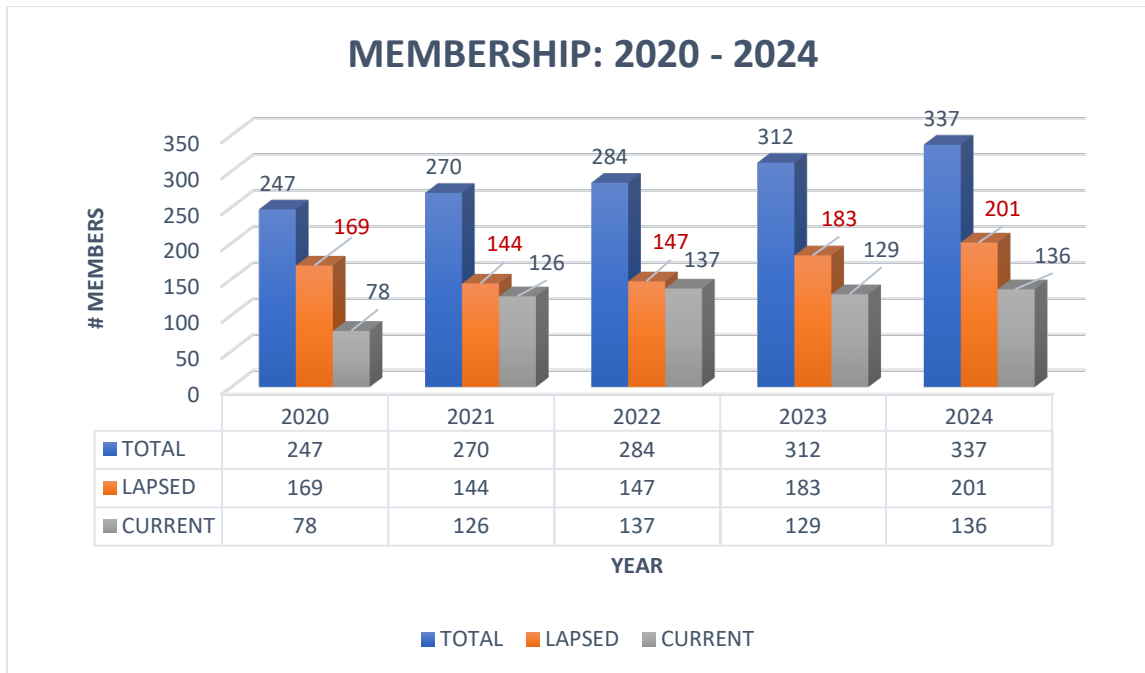
Maddysen Boecker at The Market on October 5<sup>th</sup>

👁️👁️👁️ We secured the services of Dennis Krull, 5foot20 Design Lounge, for his graphic design and photography expertise. Dennis created new graphics for our Annual Meeting and a *Save the Date* card, and he updated and redesigned our brochure into a 3-fold format. He photographed many of our events with wonderful photos of people at our tours, events, programs, and the botanic garden. 📷📷📷



## MEMBERSHIP

Membership support in NPBGS held steady with current members at 136. In lieu of an end of year donation appeal, in December we contacted lapsed members via email to request that they renew their membership. We do gain new members every year, but this gain is offset by the increase in lapsed memberships. We will strive to contact past members to request that they renew while, at the same time, we can create opportunities for member participation and engagement through more active programs. Membership incentives and member social opportunities should be considered for ways to expand NPBGS' membership base.



## Affiliations

### NPBGS is a Member Organization with the following:

North Dakota Association of Nonprofit Organizations (NDANO; [www.ndano.org](http://www.ndano.org) )

North Dakota Nursery, Greenhouse & Landscape Association (NDNGLA; [www.ndngla.com](http://www.ndngla.com) )

American Public Gardens Association ([www.publicgardens.org](http://www.publicgardens.org) )

The Arts Partnership (<https://theartspartnership.net>)

## VOLUNTEERS

NPBGS is driven through volunteer energy and initiative. All of our work would not exist without the dedicated efforts of our volunteers! Volunteers help with gardening, operational and administrative support, public relations, programs and events, finance, and membership. Also, our Board of Directors is served by volunteers who are members. Prospective volunteers are encouraged to complete a [volunteer interest form](#) online.

In addition to the numerous NPBGS volunteer efforts previously mentioned in this report, much of our volunteer energy is focused on the development and maintenance of the Northern Plains Botanic Garden. Also, NPBGS volunteers provide plant scape services to West Acres Shopping Center as part of a fee for service contract which provides funds to help support NPBGS' [mission](#).

## **NPBGS COMMITTEES IN 2024**

### **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

Matt Sorenson, President; Marissa Gapp, Vice President; Teresa Jesten, Secretary; Busola Mittleider, Treasurer

### **FINANCE COMMITTEE**

Lisa Brown, Chair; Busola Mittleider, Linda Hinrichs, and Ruth Morton

### **GARDEN AND OPERATIONS COMMITTEE**

Ruth Morton, Chair; Lisa Brown, Don DuBord, Vern Hunter, Denise Quick, Laurie Somerville, Jim Walla, Gail Wanek, Lou Worner

### **ARBORETUM (Ad hoc, Garden and Operations Committee)**

Jim Walla, Vern Hunter, Maurice Degrugillier, and Don DuBord

### **JAPANESE GARDEN (Ad hoc, Garden and Operations, Finance, and Programs)**

Vern Hunter, Chair; Lisa Brown, Joyce Pettinger, and Jim Walla

### **SPRING PLANT SALE (Ad Hoc, Garden and Finance Committees)**

Don DuBord, Chair; Lisa Brown, Maurice Degrugillier, Ruth Morton, Lou Worner, Gail Wanek

### **TEA TIME WITH FLOWERS (Ad hoc, Program and Events)**

Ann Riley, Chair; Maddysen Boecker, Lisa Brown, Don DuBord, Busola Mittleider, Ruth Morton, Joyce Pettinger, Susan Poitras, and Linda Swanson

### **SCARECROWS IN THE GARDEN (Ad hoc, Program and Events)**

Joyce Pettinger & Cynthia Herfindahl, Co-Chairs; Maddysen Boecker, Marissa Gapp, Elly Heinz, Vern Hunter, Busola Mittleider, and Linda Swanson

### **MEMBERSHIP/VOLUNTEER/NOMINATING COMMITTEE**

Ann Riley, Chair; and Lisa Brown

### **PROGRAM AND EVENTS COMMITTEE**

Lisa Brown, Marissa Gapp, Elly Heinz, Cynthia Herfindahl, Joyce Pettinger, Denise Quick

### **PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE**

Barbara Villella, Chair; Maddysen Boecker, Lisa Brown, Marissa Gapp, Ruth Morton, Mallorie Taylor-Teeple

*NPBGS thrives through the support of its volunteers. New members for our committees are very much welcome! For Volunteer Inquiries, Contact: [info@npbotanicgarden.com](mailto:info@npbotanicgarden.com) or sign up via our website: <https://www.npbgs.org/volunteer>.*

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS IN 2024

Matt Sorenson, President (2019 – 2022; 2022 – 2025; elected V. P., 2023; President, 2024)

Marissa Gapp (2020 – 2021; 2021 – 2024; 2024 – 2027; elected Vice President, 2024)

Teresa Jesten, Secretary (2020 – 2022; elected Secretary, 2020; 2022 - 2025)

Busola (Bee) Mittleider, Treasurer (2024 – 2027; elected Treasurer, 2024)

Maddysen Boecker (2024 – 2027)

Conrad Klinkhammer (2023 – 2026)

Julia Schott (2024 – 2026)

Mallorie Taylor – Teeples (2024 – 2026)

Barbara Vilella (2019 – 2022; 2022 – 2025; resigned 10/03/2024))

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### Board Terms Ending in March 2024:

Ruth Morton, Treasurer (2009 – 2014; 2018 – 2021; 2021 - 2024) \*

Mary Beyer (2020 – 2023; 2023 - 2024)\*\*

\*Treasurer Departed Board at term end in March; rejoined Board Mid-Year, 2021; elected Treasurer at the March 2022 Board Meeting.

\*\*Board Member agreed to serve a one-year term through March 2024.

Board Members are elected by the Membership in March at the Annual Meeting.  
Officers are Board-elected. Vacant Seats not filled through the election can be Board-appointed.

**NORTHERN PLAINS BOTANIC GARDEN SOCIETY**  
**P. O. BOX 3031 FARGO, NORTH DAKOTA 58108-3031**  
[info@npbotanicgarden.com](mailto:info@npbotanicgarden.com) \* [www.npbgs.org](http://www.npbgs.org)

*Civitati Faventes Horti*

*The Mission of the Northern Plains Botanic Garden Society is  
to establish a botanic garden, conservatory, and arboretum in the Fargo-Moorhead area.  
...Promoting Community through Gardening Since 1998...*

**MINUTES OF THE 26<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL MEETING**  
**NORTHERN PLAINS BOTANIC GARDEN SOCIETY**

**March 2, 2024**  
**Fargo Air Museum**  
**1609 19<sup>th</sup> Ave N, Fargo, ND 58102**

Northern Plains Botanic Garden Society's 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting was preceded by a Vendor Faire of 30 invited market vendors who opened our first [\*Annual Affaire\*](#) market at 11:00 a.m. Food, beverages, art, and crafted items were available for sale.

**2:00 p.m.:** Susan Curtis, collections manager for the [Emily Reynolds Historic Costume Collection at North Dakota State University](#), brought [Miss Okayama](#) to be exhibited in her display case before and during our keynote speaker's presentation.

**3:00 p.m.:** Leola Daul, Executive Director of [Heart-n-Soul Community Cafe](#), opened our meeting with gratitude for the vendors present and for our community who help support their mission. She mentioned their food truck expanding their outreach into the community and that they will be at NPBGS' Scarecrows in the Garden fundraising event on September 14<sup>th</sup>. She invited everyone to follow her organization via Facebook and their website.

**3:10 p.m., Keynote Speaker:** Vern Hunter introduced our keynote speaker, Alan Scott Pate, a premier dealer and authority on antique Japanese dolls. Vern mentioned the Minnesota Doll Jamboree members who were present, and he noted that they were responsible for finding and instituting the Minnesota Friendship Doll. Vern introduced Susan Curtis, as well as Ann Braaten, the past curator of the Emily Reynolds Historic Costume Collection at NDSU. It was Ann Braaten who helped NPBGS make connections with the Japan America Cultural Exchange Societies (JACES) in Okayama, who donated the Hina Doll collection to NPBGS. Vern read the bio background of Mr. Pate and introduced him. Mr. Pate thanked NPBGS, Vern, and Barbara Vilella for their hospitality, and he gave an excellent presentation on "[Japan Comes to North Dakota: Miss Okayama and the Friendship Dolls of 1927](#)". His presentation ended at 3:45 p.m.

### **Business Meeting**

President Matt Sorenson welcomed guests and members. He called the 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Northern Plains Botanic Garden Society (NPBGS) to order by gavel at 4:15 p.m. President Sorenson reminded those present that only members of NPBGS who are current their memberships are permitted to vote or take action on business matters. Printed copies of the 2023 Annual Report and the Annual Meeting Agenda were distributed.

**Minutes:** The Minutes of the 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting from March 7, 2023, were reviewed. A motion was made by Conrad Klinkhammer to approve the minutes as presented. The motion was seconded by Joyce Pettinger. Motion carried.

**Treasurer's Report:** In the absence of Treasurer Ruth Morton, President Sorenson presented the 2023 Income and Expense Statement. The report showed total current assets, liabilities, and equity of \$123,368.88. A motion was made by Ann Riley to approve the financial report. The motion was seconded by Conrad Klinkhammer. Motion carried.

**2023 Annual Report:** President Sorenson mentioned the detail shown in the [2023 Annual Report](#) and extended many thanks to Lisa Brown for her outstanding work that she did on the preparation of the Annual Report. He reminded the audience that the Annual Report can be found on the NPBGS website. Printed copies were available for the audience to have during the meeting.

**State of the Society:** President Sorenson said that the State of the Society is strong. NPBGS and the Northern Plains Botanic Garden is growing and expanding. He mentioned the updated [Virtual Garden Tour](#) which was updated last September by our friends at Be More Colorful. He mentioned some of his favorite points about our organization:

That five years ago, the Edible Forest was a big expansion project undertaken in 2019, and now it is in its 4<sup>th</sup> year of growth. Jim Walla has been doing a fantastic job in managing the Edible Forest. It is fascinating to watch its progress and we are glad for it.

The Japanese Garden is in process of development, and we just completed Phase 2 of its construction. This was a big expansion and investment of time, energy, and money.

Also, we had a very good Planning Meeting this week with exciting things to look towards and with working with the Fargo Park District.

Our organization involves a lot of people to make NPBGS tick. We now have a new focus with a strong field of new Board Candidates.

In 2023 we celebrated our 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary as an organization. President Sorenson said he looked at old Treasurer's reports from 2003 and noticed that, at one point, NPBGS was down to its last \$75, and had an end of year balance of \$556.94! Considering this low point and moving up to 2023 - with the completion of the Japanese Garden Phase 2 Construction that had expenditures exceeding \$92,000 – that is amazing progress!

Our Annual Affaire Vendor Faire and Annual Meeting: President Sorenson thanked all involved in attending and in organizing it, particularly Barbara Villella who coordinated and organized this event.

**Board Nominations and Election:** Ann Riley and President Sorenson announced the slate of Board Candidates and read the brief biographical sketches about each candidate's background.

Our Board Candidates were Maddysen Boecker, Julia Schott, Olubusola (Bee) Mittleider, Mallorie Taylor-Teeples, and current Board Member Marissa Gapp. Nominations Chairperson Ann Riley invited Nominations from the floor for additional Board Candidates. She repeated the request for Nominations from the floor an additional two times. There were no Nominations from the floor, so Chairperson Riley closed Nominations from the floor. Paper ballots and pens were distributed to NPBGS Members. Ballots included the five known candidates, plus write-in

spaces for five additional write-in names. Twenty-four (24) ballots were cast, all voting for the five known candidates (24 votes per candidate), with no write-in names. The five nominated candidates were officially voted in by the voting members.

**Recognition of Outgoing Board Members:** President Sorenson thanked and recognized our outgoing Board Members, including Past President Jerry Raguse, Treasurer Ruth Morton, and Mary Beyer.

**Member of the Year for 2023:** President Sorenson read the following justification and tribute for this award: “Our recipient for Member of the Year is hard working, persistent, and visionary. They challenge and lead us, when needed, to forge ahead into the future towards a long-sought vision of an expanded, beautiful botanic garden.

He was instrumental in drafting new concepts and leading discussions for a botanic garden Master Plan.

He planned and made the arrangements for the 2023 Annual Meeting, including arranging key participants and venue, the Hina Matsuri Japanese Doll display, and developed and organized a new annual event, *Bonsai in the Garden*.

He solicited contract bids and oversaw, and communicated with, the contractors who did the Japanese Garden Phase 2 Construction. Arranging pre-work surveys and ensuring a public communications plan about the Phase 2 Construction were part of the many things that our award recipient did “behind the scenes” of this huge project. He also procured a plant landscape design plan from Sada Uchiyama for our Japanese Garden.

In addition to helping with fundraising, this person continued to volunteer most weekdays at the botanic garden by mowing grass and maintaining the Japanese Entry Dry Garden.

Without a doubt, this person *so deserves* the Member of the Year Award for all of these accomplishments! Please join me in congratulating **VERN HUNTER** who is our 2023 MEMBER OF THE YEAR! Congratulations, Vern!”

Vern Hunter was named the 2023 Member of the Year. A monetary gift from our Founding Member, Dr. Chiwon Lee, was presented to Vern along with a plaque, a gift card, bonsai tree, bonsai snipping tool, and a thank you card. Vern expressed his gratitude and appreciation of our members and volunteers.

**Certificates of Appreciation:** Framed Certificates of Appreciation were announced and given to volunteer Joyce Pettinger, and outgoing Board Member and volunteer, Mary Beyer. Additional certificates were prepared for outgoing Board Members Jerry Raguse and Ruth Morton, who were not present. Volunteer Mary Leff, also not in attendance, was recognized with a certificate. Those not present at the meeting will be given their framed certificates at a future date. President Sorenson graciously thanked all our volunteers, and those we just recognized, who help make things happen for our organization.

**Open Discussion:** Marissa Gapp commented that the Virtual Tour was amazing. Barbara Villella discussed the details and history of the creation of the Virtual Tour and its updated version, all done by Be More Colorful. She thanked Maddysen Boecker for facilitating the Virtual Garden Tour presentation setup and display at today’s event. She said the Virtual Garden Tour is

accessible to all, all year round. As the botanic garden is in a designated “no fly zone” in close proximity to Hector International Airport, it takes special permits to allow the drone photography, and she thanked Be More Colorful for doing this work. Barbara asked people to sign up to volunteer and she mentioned that our upcoming events are listed on our Save the Date card handout.

Matt noted, as mentioned in our Annual Report, that the Northern Plains Botanic Garden has almost ¾ miles of walking pathways. Also, he thanked the Fargo Park District for our mutual partnership at the botanic garden.

Jen Walla thanked the social media team for keeping NPBGS informed about events and activities. Barbara Villella thanked Jen Walla for picking up the coffee and supplies from Thunder Coffee.

Ann Riley encouraged everyone to invite friends and family to join NPBGS as members. She noted that we have a GLOBAL membership with members in Canada, England, Texas, Maine, and other states.

**Announcements:** President Sorenson announced that the next Board Meeting will be held via Zoom on the second Thursday of March, March 14<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 p.m. Barbara will send out a social media announcement via Facebook; those interested can inquire and receive the Zoom link. All NPBGS meetings are open to the public. Barbara mentioned that other events are listed on our Save the Date card. Barbara Villella thanked Dennis Krull of 5foot20 design lounge for his graphics work and photography for NPBGS.

President Sorenson asked if there was more discussion or announcements. There being none, he entertained a motion to adjourn. Lisa Brown made a motion to adjourn, which Ann Riley seconded. The 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Northern Plains Botanic Garden Society adjourned at 5:12 p.m. A group photo was taken with the new Board candidates.

**Board Members Attending:** Matt Sorenson, Barbara Villella, Marissa Gapp, Conrad Klinkhammer, and Mary Beyer. **Known Members Attending:** Lisa Brown, John Zvirovski, Don DuBord, Vern Hunter, Ann Riley, Tom Riley, Maddysen Boecker, Joyce Pettinger, Gail Wanek, David Wanek, Lou Worner, James Hogness, Dan Johnson, Nancy Johnson, Diana Stavros, Bee Mittleider, Julia Schott, Mallorie Taylor-Teeples, Darlene Rogers, David Rogers, Cynthia Herfindahl, Kari Sunderland, and Jen Walla.

Minutes prepared by Lisa Brown and Ann Riley, recorders