

MD19 Memorial Garden Report

Thank you very much for letting me take on the role of 19 Memorial Garden Chairperson. I look forward to working on this creative, meaningful, and challenging project.

Please let me share a quick update on what's been happening in the garden this spring. First off, Peter and Michele have been kindly showing me the ropes and sharing the expectations of this position. They are wonderful mentors.

We have already had two work parties, starting a month earlier than usual in hopes to get a jump on weed control which, I believe, is our most pressing issue. Sadly, we have had small turn outs so far with 9 volunteers at the April work party and only 4 attending our one in May.

However, some volunteers are coming regularly to work in the garden outside of the scheduled second Saturday Work Parties. Rock White has taken over lawn moving duties this year. Patty Allen-White can often be found out tending to the areas that visitors see as they first pull into the drive. Gloria Hardan spends a few days in early spring pruning and caring for our rose bushes, all 25 of them! And new plants and a cherry tree have already been added this season.

The overwhelming weed problem is being addressed. As small spaces are being weeded by hand each week, a layer of cardboard and mulch (we had 8 yards delivered) is being put down in the hopes of suppressing future weeds. But with a limited number of volunteers on this project (Really, it's just one old lady with a wheelbarrow-me!) the weeds are already growing and reseeding themselves faster than we can currently clear them out. This is not just a matter of the aesthetics of an unkept garden, this could become a devastating problem. I have already found one plant that had been choked out by weeds and died. I am worried that there could be more. Each plant represents a fellow Lion and they will have to be replaced.

To that end, a campaign has been started by Governor Elect Ken Ball to raise funds to hire a yard maintenance company to come in and deftly remove the weeds in a proactive and non-chemical way. Then the garden volunteers can take over upkeep weeding and move on to other vital garden task, such as identifying and tending to sick and damaged plants, tree and shrub trimming, and make space and installing new memorial plants.

We are currently obtaining bids from local companies and are asking for help from all the clubs that are included within MD19 by either coming to the garden and lending a hand or by giving to the clean up campaign. We understand that there many reasons why the Memorial Garden is seeing less volunteers, not the least of which is the closed border, but we simply need to tackle this problem quickly. Honestly, I just need help and I'm happy to take either the brawn or the bucks from my fellow lions!

Finally, I would like to tell you about a long-term project we have begun working on recently. In a nutshell, we are creating a comprehensive map of the garden, which we have already divided up into distinct "areas", that we could eventually share with garden visitors so they can locate quickly the exact bush or tree planted in honor of the specific Lion that they are looking for. This information could eventually be posted online in some format so that Lions and their loved ones can view the information and parts of our beautiful garden without having to travel long distances.

In addition to trying to identify and map out all the plantings within the garden areas we are building an accompanying notebook or log that can be used to take notes about each of the plants. This will be a helpful tool to track the health of plants, when and how often they need special care or feeding throughout the year, when they needed to be replaced, and the like. All this information can then be saved and passed along over time to any and all new volunteers, saving them time and energy.

Thank you for all you do,
Julie Bell