

BAMGA Smithsonian Garden Tour

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Our first field trip in recent times departed Bedford, early on a cloudy Tuesday morning. Thanks to our 27 attendees who carried raincoats and umbrellas with them throughout the day, we were able to ward off the rain until after dinner on our return trip home late that same night. Traveling to Washington, DC, is always an interesting experience in 'big city traffic congestion' which makes planning a trip and estimating travel time a bit difficult.

We arrived in Washington earlier than expected, and joyfully started our trip at The United States Botanic Gardens (USBG). The USBG is one of the oldest botanic gardens in North America, established in 1820, with a mission of educating "...visitors about the importance, value and diversity of plants, as well as their aesthetic, cultural, economic, therapeutic and ecological significance." They strive, "...to demonstrate and promote sustainable practices," and "...is a living plant museum." Come on folks, this was plant heaven, nirvana or just plain happy place for a bunch of Master Gardeners!



After lunch, we met up with James Gagliardi, one of our speakers at this year's Grow the Good Life Seminar, at the Smithsonian Gardens. Little did we know (but we were all hoping for) all the experiences, sights and treats we were about to behold! We started our tour in the Enid A. Haupt Garden, which interestingly enough is pronounced help. (Not only do we work the Help Desk, but also now several of us have been in the help garden!) The gardens were beautiful, amazing, delightful, remarkable and so thoroughly enjoyable that lots of us want to see them again. We stood on roof top gardens that cover the Quadrangle complex of 4 stories below ground with, "...a beloved Victorian parterre balanced by a moongate and fountain corners to a classical courtyard topped with a daring glass and steel canopy." We saw the Katherine Dulin

Folger Rose Gardens in front of the Smithsonian Castle and then had a tour of the Mary Livingston Ripley Gardens lead by Janet Draper, a senior staff horticulturist. Remember this name as we may see her again at a future GTGL seminar.

James, our host for the day, then took us across the National Mall to the Butterfly Habitat Garden aka the Pollinators Gardens. What a treat! If you have grandchildren, know children or feel like a child yourself, you have to see this area. See the, "...bleak, concrete-dominated pedestrian causeway along the east side of the Ninth street tunnel," that was turned into an educational "...garden habitat and a beautiful urban respite 400 feet by 40 feet wide." This area is loaded with explanatory signage, plantings, water features, and did I say plants? I'm talking sensory over-load folks.



Our Mission: "To enrich the Smithsonian experience through exceptional gardens, horticultural exhibits, collections, and education." <https://smithsoniangardens.wordpress.com/about/>

We walked past the IRS office without so much as a 'bat of the eye' on our way next to the gardens surrounding the National Museum of Natural History. We saw the corners of federal buildings replanted with wonderful bird attracting gardens. We saw the now beautiful 'Hell strip' James mentioned in his GTGL talk. We traipsed through gardens full of natives, and treats and delights for our souls.

Most of our cameras/phones died by the end of the day from taking so many pictures. It was a delight to have been a participant on this trip. I enjoyed the company of fine BAMGA members, family and friends. We came home with lots of take a-ways to use in future BAMGA events, like Farmers' Markets, children's events, ideas for the gardens at Claytor, and ideas for GTGL to name a few. Were we tired at the end of the day? You betcha! We came home happy to have traveled and to have seen the sights we saw and so looking forward to sleeping in our own beds that night. Dorothy got it right, "There's no place like home."

If you'd like information on the Smithsonian Gardens, you can go to this link:

<https://www.si.edu/museums/smithsonian-gardens>

Quotes in this article came from the book, A Guide to Smithsonian Gardens, by Carole Ottesen, a gift from friends.

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