

Bereaved Parents' Garden News

April 2020



Welcome to Our Memorial Garden

Everyone is welcome to enjoy our beautiful Memorial Garden and the beauty of all the nature that is out there. Sit and listen to the birds sing, watch for beautiful butterflies, listen to the wind chimes or just enjoy the peacefulness of a quiet evening remembering our beautiful children, grandchildren, and siblings!

It takes a lot of hard work to keep the garden beautiful. We would like to thank those that have generously given of their time to make the garden a beautiful place to honor and remember our children.

Welcome to our "Place of Peace!"

BPUSA Memorial Garden
St. Benedict Monastery
9535 Linton Hall Road
Bristow, VA

Annual Butterfly Release
Sunday, August 16, 2020

5:30 p.m.

BPUSA Memorial Garden

Memorial Rocks

There is still room for more memorial rocks. We highly recommend that they be ordered from "Rock-It Creations." The large size is the best size to order allowing for enough room to personalize and customize with your child's name engraved on the rock, please do not order larger than the large size. These rocks are river rocks and will last a lifetime!

Go to Rock-It Creations' website to order a rock in memory of your loved one at <https://www.rockitcreations.com>.

Please follow our guidelines and do not place "fake" resin or plaster rocks or stepping stones in the garden. These do not last more than one season – it breaks our heart when these stones no longer look nice or are broken due to the weather or deer stepping on them. We know that they were lovingly placed in our garden in memory of your beloved child, but will be removed if they become broken or unreadable.

If you want to put a rock in our garden that is not from Rock-it Creations, please make sure that they are made of stone, rock, concrete or cement so they will last forever.

For more information about our Memorial Garden please contact:

Bev Ruane, Garden Chair
ruane.beverly@yahoo.com
(703) 395-9546

or

Jodi Norman, Chapter Leader
bpusanova@gmail.com
703-656-6999

Bereaved Parents of the USA, Northern Virginia Chapter
P.O. Box 7675, Woodbridge, VA 22195

A Message from Bev Ruane, Garden Chair:

Hello everyone! Welcome to the special edition of our Garden News! In this newsletter there will be information about how the garden began; ideas to maintain the beauty of the garden; future improvements, including care and guidelines; suggestions to raise funds for the garden; and information on Rock-It Creations. This newsletter contains much information so please be sure to read it!

Each year, I talk about the new growth that is coming after the garden looks so bleak all winter. We need to ready the garden in the spring so we may enjoy it when it's grown and beautiful. Then it needs to be maintained. I know we all have yards that need to be cared for. I know I do. This garden is "extra special." It is honoring our children. We wouldn't have this special place if our children hadn't passed away. I would much rather have Matthew here and attend to yardwork at home; rather than have a memorial garden to work in to honor my son. Unfortunately, this is not the case. Therefore, my yard and flowers are neglected in lieu of something special such as the memorial garden. I would much rather have it looking nice than my own yard.

In early Spring, bushes need to be trimmed, weeds need to be pulled, new plants need to be planted, areas to clean up, leaves to remove and mulch to spread. All of this is very time consuming. The more people that participate, the less time it will take to accomplish what is needed to be done. Although, in the beginning there is much to do to ready the garden for Spring, there is the continued maintenance. As you know with your own yard, there is always an over-abundance of weeds. They are the only things that will survive anything! So, they need to be pulled frequently. Not once a month but at least once a week. I know there are those that visit the garden because I've seen the memoriams you have left for your child. When you go, please stay a little longer and pull a few weeds. Pulling weeds is the most time consuming. Plan a weekday or a weekend to come and work a little. Jodi or I do not have to be there. If you have any questions we can always be contacted through calls or texts. If the few of us that work in the garden were unable to do it, then it would not look as nice as it does and would be a dishonor to our children. Also, the property is loaned to us for free by the Sisters; therefore, they could take it back from us. Something that none of us want to happen.

As the warmer weather arrives so does the need to water. There are watering facilities and a hose to water the garden. If you are unfamiliar with where the water is or how to operate the well faucet, just come when someone is there or let us know you are going and you will be shown. Then you can visit anytime and give the garden a good drink!

We are encouraging everyone to help keep our garden beautiful. Always, if at any time you would like to help or are unsure what to do, please ask! It's to honor our children! I know they would be so proud!

All of that being said, I would like to thank those that have come to help work in the garden on work days and in-between. Many hours have been spent to get the work done. Unfortunately, only a handful of people participate. I understand there are other things that occupy our time but at this particular time in all of our lives, a perfect opportunity presents itself to beautify our garden. We are in an open space and can social distance very well.

In conclusion, if you have read through this special edition of our Garden News, thank you! It is packed full of information. Any comments, suggestions, and/or questions are welcome.

Just remember that this garden was created for all bereaved parents in memory and honor of our beloved children. It provides a beautiful place to come to sit, enjoy and reflect on our children. You are encouraged to visit. This Memorial Garden for all bereaved parents was established on the monastery grounds that the Sisters call the "Place of Peace."



Improvements and Updates

There are several repairs and updates we need to do:

Posts on the arbor need to be replaced because they are bowed and split. David Ruane has agreed to replace them but will need some help. David and Bruce Butts built the arbor in the beginning and it has stood up well. The posts are concreted in so that needs to be dug up and replaced with the new posts.

The old edging needs to be pulled up and replaced because it is broken and buried so much that it isn't allowing a distinction between the walkway and the garden.

We need to replenish the gravel within the walkway. There are areas that the gravel has gotten thin.

The windchimes in the arbor need to be repaired with new string. There are a couple of broken strings. It is repairable. It was placed there by an anonymous donor in the very beginning of the garden, therefore, has special meaning.

We are planning to add a box to place newsletters in for visitors to the garden, helping to reach out to other bereaved parents in the area.

The grasses have been removed on the right side of the garden and we are looking to replace them with 3-4 Butterfly Bushes. This gives you the perfect opportunity to donate one in your child's memory. If you would like to donate a butterfly bush or a perennial please contact Bev or Jodi so we will be able to work with you and decide the best location to place it in the garden.

All donations of plants, materials or money are welcomed to help keep our garden the most beautiful on the Monastery Grounds.

Fundraising and Donations

Funds to maintain our garden is always a concern. It takes money to buy things to maintain our garden, plants, and mulch. Without funds we would not be able to maintain the garden.

In the past the chapter would have yard sales with all proceeds going to the garden fund. We are considering having one at Bev's home in Stafford when we are able to socialize again and the state "Stay at Home" order is lifted. Start saving your treasurers for a Yard Sale – hopefully this summer!

We are mulling over fundraising ideas. Especially, ones that we can do now since we are unable to socialize. We are open to suggestions. In addition to the suggestions, we need participation. Without participation, the fundraiser does no good. Thank you to all that have participated in the past! We couldn't have done it without you!

The fundraisers will not occur immediately because it takes time and preparation and funds are needed now. If you don't want to donate a plant or other item, please consider providing a monetary donation in memory of your child, grandchild or sibling.

We can't emphasize enough the importance of needed funds to continue making the garden a place we can be proud of in memory of our children.

All donations will be acknowledged in the chapter newsletter.

History of our Memorial Garden

By Bev Ruane

I would like to tell you about how the garden began, since many of you may not be aware. The Memorial Garden in memory of our children began as a dream of mine. After my son, Matthew, died in 2002, we returned from his burial to find our neighbor had taken a small corner of our front yard and created "Matthew's Garden." Seeing and attending to the garden everyday brought me comfort. From then on, I had a dream for a memorial garden for bereaved parents to honor and remember their children. A place where parents could go and receive comfort and feel closer to their children. It was a dream that I never thought would happen; knowing that it would take more money than I or anyone else I knew could afford.

I became a Master Gardner in 2005. One evening I went to a special meeting in which there was going to be a landscape designer as the guest speaker. He spoke about creating gardens at the St. Benedict Monastery in Bristow, where our garden is now. After the meeting, I approached him and asked if he thought it would be possible to have a memorial garden there to honor our children who died too soon. He said he would check with the Sisters and they gladly said YES! Hence the beginning of the Bereaved Parents' Memorial Garden.

We now had a place to have it, we just needed the design and the plants to create it; but the biggest expense was covered. The landscape designer, free of charge, drew the design. The design of our garden now has the basic design with changes to accommodate our needs and finances. In 2007, the first butterfly bushes were planted.

Over the years, the garden has grown and evolved into what it is today. Each year we add new perennials and annuals, and other plants as needed. The garden was ready for the dedication and our first butterfly release in 2012. It was a beautiful gathering with readings, music and the butterfly release. To be there and participate in the dedication of the Memorial Garden was a dream come true.

Guidelines:

In order to keep and maintain the beauty of this peaceful place that we have, we have set some guidelines.

If you are not a member of BPUSA NOVA Chapter and place something in the garden in memory of your child, grandchild or sibling we want to know who you are and have contact information for you. Please send an email, call or text either Bev or Jodi. See contact info on page one.



Memorial Rocks:

We all want to do special things to honor our children. One way is to place a rock with our child's name and dates on it. There are those that have chosen to place memorials made of resin, plaster or something that is less substantial than a solid stone. There are some pretty pieces that have been chosen and placed in the garden. Although, they honor your child and are very nice in the beginning, over time they may become worn and faded and often crack. When someone visits the garden and sees a stone that is worn, faded or cracked, it may sadden them more. Having a beautiful solid stone that was created to stand up to the weather will be admired and allow your child to stand out above others. If you need to purchase a rock or need to replace one, there are companies that will engrave what you want on the rock. Rock-It Creations is the company we recommend. Please do not order a rock larger than the large size. Some of the rocks have been in the garden for many years and they are "solid as a rock" and still beautiful. If you need help in deciding, there are those of us who are more than willing to help.

Stepping Stones:

Along the lines of the rocks, there have, also, been placed some beautiful and meaningful stepping stones. Although, one would think that a stepping stone would stand up to the weather because it is a "stepping stone," that is not always the case. The majority of them are made of resin, plaster or a material that will break down over time. When it begins to break down, it cracks and often breaks into several pieces. As much meaning as the stepping stone may have, when it becomes broken it is no longer pretty. It represents our already broken hearts. To help maintain the beauty and neatness of our garden, the broken pieces will be removed. If the stone that is broken has your child's name on it, you will need to be the one to remove and replace it.

You may opt to replace it with another stepping stone, which is fine, but if possible do so with one made of concrete or rock so it will stand the test of time. If unable to do so, please remember that if it becomes broken or unreadable it will be removed, although it will sadden us to do so.

Mementoes:

Other things that are often done to remember our children are to place mementoes in our garden, items that remind you of your child. Please try to keep the items to a minimum and if these items become broken, faded or in disrepair, they will be removed.

Flowers:

Flowers, both perennials and annuals, can be planted in our garden in memory of your child.

Ground vases are provided if you would like to bring cut flowers in memory of your child, grandchild or sibling.

Please remember that there is no way that we can limit public access or ensure the security of the items that are left at the garden.

Please keep our garden trash-free and dispose of trash properly.

These guidelines help to keep the garden looking clean, neat and beautiful. After all, this garden is in memory of our children, grandchildren, and siblings.