

Botanical garden plan growing in N.E. Iowa

By MELODY PARKER
Courier Staff Writer

Gardening is good for the soul. It teaches us to live and work in harmony with nature. Our green thumbs can help us become backyard ecologists. Cultivating a garden feeds our creative urges and challenges our intellect, just as produce we grow feeds our bodies and flowers delight our senses.

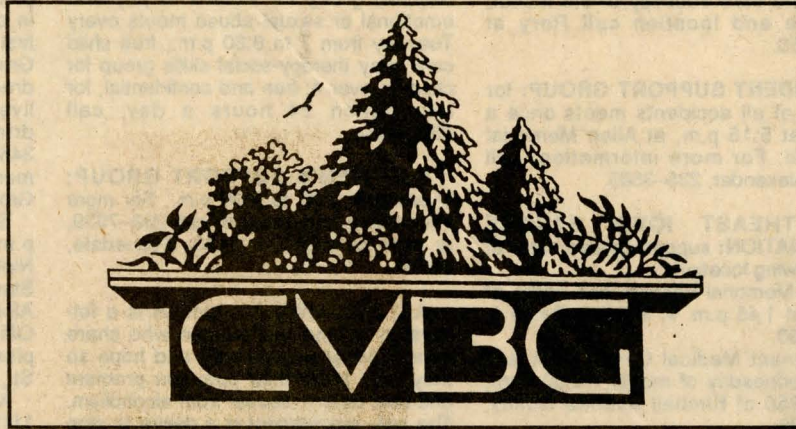
On a larger scale, a botanical garden can improve the quality of life in a community, the primary goal of the newly formed Cedar Valley Botanical Garden Association.

A botanical garden would be an image enhancer for Northeast Iowa, says Association president Dick Meyerhoff, a longtime gardener noted for pansies and newsletter editor of the Cedar Valley Men's Garden Club.

"Not only would it draw people from out in the area and draw tourists to Waterloo and Cedar Falls, it would also be someplace nice to go for residents in the surrounding communities and our own community," he maintains.

"Money Magazine recently rated Waterloo as the top place to live in Iowa. Let's build on that momentum."

The idea blossomed after Meyerhoff's visit this summer to the Dubuque Arboretum and Botanical Gardens. Ten years ago, the Dubuque Arboretum Association, Inc., a volunteer non-profit group, leased 16.5 acres of Marshall Park from the city for a nominal sum to



more. An amphitheater may be added.

Meyerhoff then began making contacts with metro area organizations and residents, who expressed support for a botanical garden. These organizations include Cedar Valley Men's Club; Chain of Lakes; Iowa Heritage Foundation; Green Scene; Junior League of Waterloo-Cedar Falls; University of Northern Iowa; and Hawkeye Institute of Technology, among others.

The CVBG Association will be incorporated as a non-profit organization, and those documents are in the preparation process. Additionally, plans are made to have the logo, designed by graphic artist Nancy Bartusch of Cedar Falls, registered as a trademark.

Current members of the steering committee include Sen. Jim Lind; Harley Brodersen, president of the Cedar Valley Men's Garden Club;

ern Iowa greenhouses; and Craig Gibleon, president of Preserves Assistance League (PAL's).

"I think a botanical garden would be a cultural addition to our community. We need those kinds of things here," Winegarden comments.

Presently, the Association is trying to locate and secure suitable property for development. Criteria include a site large enough for future expansion, hopefully with existing healthy trees, access to utilities such as water and electricity, and easy accessibility for tourists and residents.

Obviously, a major site requirement is good soil, well drained with minimum erosion problems and out of the flood plain with some protection from strong winds. The terrain must also be accessible for the handicapped and aged.

When the right property is located, it may take one or two years to have the site developed as a botanical garden — "this is going to be much more than going out and scattering a few seeds," Meyerhoff emphasizes.

Volunteers to work in numerous capacities from gardener to designer to carpenter will be recruited from a broad sector of the community.

"We are recruiting people with all kinds of skills and abilities to form this new association which will turn a dream into reality."

The Association will welcome membership of any interested individuals or groups. In fact, to increase awareness of the benefits and beauty of a botanical garden, the group is promoting visits to botanical gardens in Dubuque, Clinton, Elkader and others throughout the Midwest.

The metro area project will also be dependent upon gifts of money, materials and services, he says. "No tax money will be used because city parks departments and city budgets are being squeezed.

"Lottery money may very well be a big factor in the development of our project. According to facts pro-

vided to me by Sen. Lind, the Iowa Tomorrow Plan is structured to enhance development in nine important areas."

Among these is to maintain and develop vital and liveable communities; build a positive external and internal image; maintain a climate for business development; and assure the continued quality of our environment and natural resources.

The steering committee will also examine grant possibilities for funding and hopes to eventually establish an endowment fund to perpetuate the facility once it is under way.

Association objectives include:

- To develop a showcase to introduce different cultivars, methods and techniques to the community;
- To encourage hobby gardening for exercise, relaxation and enjoyment;
- To encourage landscape development and beautification of residential, business and industrial areas;
- To provide an opportunity for the culturally deprived, disabled individuals and the aged to enjoy the outdoors;
- To promote organic gardening practices;
- To demonstrate soil building and environment protection;
- To educate through displays, catalogs and a library for user information;
- To provide a place of escape for people who are stressed with demands of job, home and family.

The Cedar Valley Botanical Garden might feature: a four seasons drive-through display; butterfly garden; hummingbird garden; All-America Selections; herb garden; prairie preserve; turf grass demo area; woodland flowers; perennial beds; annual beds; azalea collection; viburnum collection; conifer collection; ornamental shrubs; water garden; vegetable garden; small berries; orchard; vineyard; soil building, composting ground cover; rose garden; hostas; iris, peony, cactus and bulb collections, including tulips, daffodils and other spring flowers and lilies and dahlias.

The garden would also employ innovative gardening techniques such as protective tunnels and grow tunnels, mulching and drip irrigation.

"I think with community support we could develop the finest botanical garden in the state," Meyerhoff adds.

Anyone interested in getting involved in the project as a volunteer or contributor may call Meyerhoff at 233-4770 or Winegarden at 266-0794.

"We are recruiting people with all kinds of skills to form this new association which will turn a dream into reality."

**Dick Meyerhoff, president
Cedar Valley Botanical Garden
Association**

develop a botanical garden and arboretum.

Approximately 30,000 people visited the Dubuque gardens last year. It boasts an award-winning rose garden, extensive hosta glade, man-made waterfall, seed saver's food garden, an iris collection, home gardening learning center, gazebo, flower beds featuring native and unusual cultivars, and

Michael Powelka, certified nurseryman; Arnold Webster, consulting arborist and certified nurseryman; Fred Button; Joan Poe; Mary Ann Wilson; Helen E. McCulley; Dr. William Cozart, DDS; L. Jeanette Winegarden, Black Hawk County Soil and Water Conservation District commissioner; Leila George, certified nurseryman and assistant manager of the University of North-