


friends of
Mandell Park

Fall
2007

1st Plant Sale Blossomed — Now It's An Annual Event

Last March, more than 300 people came to the First Annual Spring Plant Sale sponsored by Friends of Mandell Park. The sale generated about \$4800! But, the greater benefit was the exposure to the community of Mandell Park along with the new master plan for further development of the park.

Special thanks goes to co-chairs, **Teresa Byrne-Dodge** and **Mary Nurre**, and event underwriter, John Daugherty realtor **Charlie Neath**.

Teresa did a fabulous job of coordinating over 50 volunteers including boy scouts from Troop 354. Mary faced the daunting task of organizing and pricing the plants, which included a wide variety of cuttings, seedlings, divided plants, seeds, tubers and bulbs as well as larger potted trees and plants.

We also thank all our generous in-kind donors, who are listed on the back page.



PLANT SALE PHOTOS BY BILLY OLIVER



Mark your calendar now for the 2nd Annual Plant Sale, Saturday, March 29, 2008. Planning is already underway and there are lots of ways to get involved! Please contact Lynn Kelly at FoMandellPark@aol.com today.

TOP: Plant Sale planning committee members Mary Nurre, Skip Almoney, Charles Neath, Teresa Byrne-Dodge, Lynn Kelly and Janet Neath. Not pictured: Adra Hooks and Paul Lester.

MIDDLE: Adra Hooks organized the checkout station.

RIGHT: The big plants went early!



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Friends of Mandell Park:

The last several months have been both busy and productive for The Friends of Mandell Park. In 2007, we have had held our first plant sale; initiated the Annual Appeal; purchased a new mower to improve lawn maintenance; launched our website; and



CHECK OUT OUR NEW WEBSITE

www.friendsofmandellpark.org

communicated our vision to many new people throughout Houston.

SPRING SALE

The spring plant sale not only raised just over \$4800 but greatly increased community awareness. Thanks to all the dedicated volunteers who worked so hard, but I want to especially thank three people: Teresa Byrne-Dodge chaired the committee and handled the promotion for the sale; Mary Nurre worked tirelessly to gather and pot plants from all over Houston and priced the plants for sale; finally, Charles Neath, of John Daugherty Realtors, our generous underwriter.

PARK MAINTENANCE

Our mowing team has increased to five volunteers. With all the rain in Houston lately we have had a hard time keeping ahead of the grass, but thanks to the volunteers,

the park continues to look very lush and green. We had to replace one of our mowers in July, as it just gave out after a long hard effort!

ANNUAL APPEAL

To date, more than 40 people have responded to our Annual Appeal letter with contributions totaling over \$5,000. I thank you for your generosity and support.

NEW WEBSITE

Please visit us online at www.friendsofmandellpark.org. Minor Design Group has translated our ideas into a beautifully graphic site. It includes our history, our vision and goals, pictures, and online contributions via PayPal.

Looking ahead, we have started planning our 2nd annual spring plant sale. Mark your calendar for Saturday, March 29, 2008. Contact fomandellpark@aol.com to join the planning committee.

We will soon be applying for grants from various foundations. The estimated cost of implementing the master plan design is \$1.3 million plus an additional \$200,000 for a maintenance fund bringing our total fund raising goal to \$1.5 million. A tall order, but we can do it with your help!

A handwritten signature in green ink that reads "Stanley R. Almoney".

Stanley (Skip) Almoney
President, Friends of Mandell Park

FALL WORK DAY

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 6, 2007: Plan to gather in the park at 9 am to tackle the following projects:

- Removing ginger plants behind the garden
- Trimming bushes and trees
- Installing a new floor in the mower shed
- Making and repairing benches and tables
- Rebuilding the retaining walls for the garden beds
- Repotting plants for the spring plant sale
- Repairing sidewalks and curbs; filling in ruts and holes
- Mowing and edging the grass

Don't forget to wear gloves, and bring your tools. It's a great opportunity to meet fellow gardeners and park supporters and enjoy the camaraderie of working together. Please advise Fall Work Day coordinator Jackie Hurst (713-385-5921), Skip Almoney (713-524-4285) or fomandellpark@aol.com know if you plan to attend so they can coordinate projects and refreshments.

Who is Meredith?

The most frequently asked question about Mandell Park is “Why is the organic community garden called *Meredith Gardens*?”

Recently Janet Neath, Friends of Mandell Park board member, and Lorelei de la Reza, garden volunteer, visited with Meredith Burke to relive the early days and how it all got started. Here’s their story.

In the 1980s, Meredith and Scott Burke and their daughter, Dustin, lived across the street from what we now call Mandell Park.

Unexpectedly the City’s plan to site a new library on the corner was changed and the property became an overgrown, unsightly dumping ground.

The neighbors banded together to clean the property, but it was Meredith’s idea to create an organic community garden.

“Creating the garden was due in large part to the strong sense of community spirit, I felt, and a desire to create an inviting place of natural beauty,” Meredith explained. “My motivation to appear before [Houston] City Council was determination! I knew there was no reason not to have a garden on what was once an abandoned and neglected land, and after many months of waiting for legal permission, it became increasingly difficult to wait for the wheels of bureaucracy to turn in our favor. When we finally approached Mayor Lanier and City Council with our plan, we were given full support, with the mayor promptly directing his staff to “make it happen!”

“Within a week I was building the first bed!” she enthusiastically



Meredith Burke with her twin daughters, Fiona and Anna.

recalled. “Immediately the garden took on a life of its own with volunteers eager to be a part of our endeavor and curious passersby stopping to share their own gardening stories with, of course, plenty of advice!”

The unique garden design reflects Meredith’s artistic sense. It was imperative to shape the beds naturalistically rather than geometrically, with no right angles.

“As to my motivation for dragging the hose across the street? To echo Mayor Lanier’s response, it was the only way ‘to make it happen!’” she laughed. “But as idealistic as I was (and still am!), and to the degree of nurturance I provided to our tiny plot of earth, I was elated when our water line was hooked up!”

“Thanks for letting me share a bit of the garden history. It brought up some wonderful memories and very fond feelings — mostly in gratitude for having the unique opportunity to bring a small, but significant, idea into being. And in gratitude to Friends of Mandell Park for keeping it alive!”

In 1997, the gardeners unanimously agreed on the official name “Meredith Gardens” in her honor. The original beds have flourished and continue to be the centerpiece of the Mandell Park master plan. As to the Burkes, their needs changed greatly with the addition of twin girls, and they moved to a larger house in a nearby neighborhood.

Friends of Mandell Park newsletter

Lynn Kelly, Editor
Jen Cooper, Designer

COMMENTS

Use the address below or, for the quickest response, contact us via email at fomandellpark@aol.com.

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CONTRIBUTORS

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