



White Plains Beautification Foundation, Inc.

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WPBF Begins Ambitious Plans for 50th Anniversary Next Year

Although White Plains Beautification Foundation isn't taking credit for the arrival of two dozen robins, which landed on the front lawn and winterberry hawthorn tree at a board member's home today, the all-volunteer organization wants to share its optimism with the public.

Despite the arctic blast that has clad much of the nation in white, there is hope. At last week's monthly meeting, members discussed not only plans for its 50th anniversary year in 2015 but also its plan for the demise of winter and its many snowstorms. Flowers will begin their golden appearance in just a few short weeks. The trick is to say "snow be gone" approximately 50 times and then you will see daffodils, blooming pear trees, forsythia and more tulips than you can imagine.

Several thousand tulip bulbs are planted annually for maximum size and bloom. The previous year's bulbs are dug up and re-used elsewhere or given away. Leaving the old bulbs reduces the dynamics of massive plantings, such as the entrance garden in Tibbits Park on North Broadway near the Presbyterian Church by Barker Avenue. Tibbits Park, the commons and training ground for militia during the American Revolution and later a dumping ground for discarded household items, extends from Barker Avenue to Armory Place near The Westchester. It is the centerpiece between the two directions of North Broadway (Rt. 22) traffic and is divided into segments by intersections at Lake Street, Hamilton Avenue and Main Street.

The commons deteriorated to such an extent that in 1898, a group of citizens met to discuss ways to improve the area. Chaired by Charles E. Tibbits, the group created the Village Board of Trustees and beautification efforts began. Later, in his retirement years, Tibbits devoted himself entirely to the park, planting, weeding and checking on trees and shrubs. Thus the park was named to honor him.

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The City of White Plains continues to maintain the park while WPBF carries on the tradition of Charles Tibbits and his dream of a beautiful White Plains. WPBF incorporated in 1965.

Planting chair Karen Quinn, a VP of the 49-year-old 501(c)3 non-profit organization of volunteers and holder of a New York Botanical Garden Landscape Design certificate, and members of her committee meet with local professional landscapers to discuss every year's seasonal plans for each of its 50 or so gardens, not only in the park but throughout the city.

There is no more beautiful sight than what will appear in exactly two months from today. Hundreds of Kwanzan cherry trees will turn Tibbits Park and nearby Turnure Park into fairylands of pink fluff, an incredible sight that WPBF hopes everyone will visit. The original trees were a project of WPBF in 1970, and each tree was in honor of or in memory of someone. The first trees were planted in the median along outer Mamaroneck Avenue, leading out of town toward Mamaroneck. Names are engraved on a bronze plaque on a boulder near the playground in the park on Gedney Way. Some famous names are among them. Many more cherry trees were planted in Tibbits Park at the same time. Since then even more have been planted as a gift from the James Lober family.

In addition to the many gardens and flowers within the park, other special features that come to life in springtime are the gazebo, two fountains, a tall street clock, the summerhouse and nearly 100 teak benches. Funds for all projects come from tax-exempt contributions from residents and businesses of White Plains and beyond. No government funds are provided, although the organization receives full support from the Department of Public Works, the Recreation and Parks Department, the mayor and Common Council.

Homeowners should begin planning their gardens now, says President Deborah Donahoe, who reminds the public that WPBF keeps an eye on residents' gardens, many of which are identified and recognized by the frontyard garden committee. It's time to think spring, not winter. The snow is melting. Winter be gone!

The robins that ate all the berries on the winter king hawthorn tree are definitely a sign of things to come.

About White Plains Beautification Foundation: Incorporated in 1965, after its start in 1952 as a small committee, WPBF is a not-for-profit organization, whose many projects include extensive tree-planting, establishing and maintaining 60-plus gardens, building two fountains, a summerhouse and gazebo. WPBF receives no government funding and relies solely on business and individual donations. Its structure consists of a board of directors and a group of associate volunteers. Those wishing to attend monthly meetings and learn more about becoming involved are most welcome.