

City, community members work to bring back peace and tranquility of Oriental Garden in Alton

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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ALTON - Peace and tranquility are the only way to describe the feeling one gets at the **Oriental Garden at Gordon Moore Park**.

Water flowed from a stream at the beloved Oriental Garden at Gordon Moore Park in Alton for the first time in several years on Monday morning in front of some long-time supporters of the area, staff and **Alton Mayor Brant Walker**. The city staff recently repaired a pump and cleaned up the immediate area where the stream leads into a pond. The pump was turned on Monday morning.

There is an effort by the city and the community in partnership to revitalize the garden area.

Plans are in place to plant Japanese cherry trees and assorted amount of other themed trees, thanks to some generous community donations. The Missouri Botanical Gardens Horticulture Supervisor, Ben Chu, has even offered to prune one of the trees and is helping design where some of the trees will be placed and what type of trees to plant.

For Mayor Walker, getting the parks back to what they used to be is a top priority, even without needed state funding. He said manufacturing a rebirth of the Oriental Garden area is just another example of how he and his staff are committed to “quality of life issues.”

“We have 19 parks over 1,700 acres,” Walker said. “We are very blessed to have that and we are just working to make our community a better place to live.”

Peggy Tavernier has joined a committee to work on the garden as secretary. She is doing that in memory of her dad, **LeRoy Tavernier**, who was one of the original founders of the Oriental Garden.

“The Oriental Garden area is very important to Alton,” she said. “Things had gotten into bad shape and it is a beautiful place for weddings and other different affairs. We hope we can get some contributions to do some of the things we have planned for this area. I am thankful for some who have already contributed.”

Joan Sheppard and her husband, **Chuck**, were also original founders of the Oriental Garden, and they were on hand Monday, demonstrating their love of the scenic area.

“We started this project 25 years ago,” Sheppard said. “We plan to put a grove of five cherry trees on the hillside. **Mr. Ben Chu**, who is responsible for the Japanese and Chinese Gardens at the Missouri Botanical Garden, also said he would help with pruning of one of the Weeping Cherry trees here. I do love this place.”

Joan's husband, Chuck, a local engineer, helped with the building of the Oriental Garden area in its beginning. Joan and Chuck spent many volunteer hours in the park and often Mary Moore, Gordon Moore's wife, would fix lunch for them.

Joan Sheppard thanked Mayor Walker for his commitment to making the area look healthy again and for his staff's work in the project.

Dr. Sadiq Mohyuddin and his wife, **Talat**, have also been involved in the garden for years and years. Dr. Mohyuddin said the "heart and soul" of the garden is the running water and he was extremely pleased to see the water flowing perfectly again.



Bob Barnhart, Alton Public Works Director, said the work on the Oriental Garden being done now is "long overdue" and he said he and his staff are trying to do everything they can to revitalize this area and all the parks in the city.

"It is a challenge with the state's financial situation, but we are all pulling together to redo the parks," he said.

Walker said the city staff worked hard to get the water flowing again, taking tons of debris out of the canal.

“Bob Barnhart and our staff have done a terrific job on this,” Walker said.

