

FEATURED GARDEN *by Cathie Lank*

The new Margaret Brown Memorial Garden contains an amazing diversity and number of plants, something that could not have been more appropriate for a garden representing its namesake.

Margaret touched the lives of many people, not just in Calgary but at a national and international level as well. An avid gardener, she was a driving force behind the Calgary Horticultural Society, sitting on the board of directors for many years as well as volunteering in just about every other department.

"She was a dedicated volunteer for 25 years at the Calgary Horticultural Society and brought in the idea of Open Gardens with hers being one of the first," said Diane Hobbs, coordinator of the Margaret

Brown Memorial Garden. "She was also at many plant exchanges, taught many workshops and was part of the speaker's bureau. If there was something horticultural, Margaret Brown would be on it!"

In fact, Margaret was also one of the founders of the Calgary Rock and Alpine Garden Society (CRAGS) and was a member of the Northwest Horticultural Group (NWHG). She was always happy to share her plants with anyone who showed an interest and was often there to help out neighbours and friends when they needed a hand in their gardens.

"The Northwest Horticultural Group wanted to create this memorial garden because any time you turned around and did something horticultural in



MARGARET BROWN MEMORIAL GARDEN

this city, there was Margaret Brown!" said Diane. "The memorial garden, run under the Adopt-A-Park program, is the first of its kind in the city where a public space is dedicated to a citizen-at-large showing how far-reaching Margaret was."

The memorial garden is located at 53rd St NW between Varsity Drive and Varsity Estates Drive opposite the Silver Springs Golf and Country Club and accessed via walking paths. It was originally created by Jan Geggie of the Varsity Community Association as a gathering site, consisting of a landscaped area with trees, shrubs and donated park benches. Upon receiving approval from Varsity the NWHG put in their proposal to the city for the memorial garden to be located at this site.

Once approved, the work started. Help came from everywhere and in many forms; volunteers, plants, compost, hardscaping and the list went on. Everything was documented so the history of the garden would be remembered. Many commercial nurseries and greenhouses in Calgary participated with financial aid, volunteer time and plant donations. It was as though everyone whose lives Margaret had touched was giving back to bring the garden to life in true community spirit, the community that Margaret had built and nurtured when she was alive.

"We started with the removal of existing shrubs that we weren't going to use and gave them back to the Varsity community to use in new gathering sites. Then we brought in ten yards of compost spreading and digging it in," said Diane. "Then we brought in the plants, some came from Margaret's own garden, making it a true memorial."

The project was done by and will be maintained by the NWHG. A trellis in the garden in the shape of an open book represents Margaret's love of books,



is where the clematis collection, one of her favourite vines, is located. In the alpine garden, many plants from her garden are included and will be shaded by the clematis. Other plants that came from Margaret's garden include Martagon lilies, peonies, roses and primulas, another of Margaret's favourite flowers.

In all there are over 100 alpine plants and well over 300 perennials in the bed, which measures 7 by 18 metres. Designed to be viewed from the pathway or grass area, the garden includes a sitting area at one end where people can enjoy the plants and view.

Many agree that the greatest legacy Margaret Brown left is the number of people she mentored as gardeners, a gift that will keep on giving as they pass their knowledge on to other gardeners.

The official opening of the garden takes place on Saturday, June 19 at 10:30 a.m. and the NWHG is working on getting a series of speakers from the Calgary Horticultural Society, CRAGS, Calgary Parks and Recreation and the Varsity Community Association for the event.