



FRIENDS OF  
BIRMINGHAM BOTANICAL GARDENS

# THE garden DIRT

JULY/AUGUST 2007  
[www.bbgardens.org](http://www.bbgardens.org)



**Make exercise  
fun again** pg. 3.

**Library art gallery  
hosts two  
new artists** pg. 5

**A.P. Biology labs  
finish season at  
The Gardens** pg. 7

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT written by Karen Gaspers, 2006-2007 BBG Education Docent.

The next time you stroll through the Japanese Gardens admiring its beauty, think of Bob Wendorf. Wendorf has been volunteering in the Japanese Gardens for the past five years, performing a wide range of behind-the-scenes activities. His handiwork is visible in everything from the new bamboo fence around the tea house to coordinating Sakura, a spring celebration at The Gardens that revolves around the cherry blossoms.

“I just enjoy doing it,” he says, when asked why he spends so much time and effort on The Gardens. “It’s a way of creating some beauty, a way of giving the self serenity.”

Wendorf also helps with training. He has educated Garden Docents about the Japanese Gardens and written a handbook for them on the topic. And he teaches roughly one class each year at The Gardens on topics such as tree trimming in bonsai and Japanese gardens.

But his favorite activity is working in the garden, trimming trees. “It’s relaxing, and you see instant results,” he explains. “You know you’ve done something to make the garden more authentically Japanese.”

It also gives him the chance to meet people from all over the world. “While I’m working, people stop and talk to me,” he says. “You have to be down there working to appreciate how popular [the Japanese Gardens] are with foreign tourists. It’s actually a destination spot.”

To anyone who knows Wendorf, it’s no surprise he is avid about the Japanese Gardens. He has a long relationship with things Asian, starting with a grandfather who collected Japanese pottery and artwork and a father who was stationed in Japan as part of the occupation army after World War II. “I had a wood block print in my room before I even knew what it was,” he recalls.

As an adult, Wendorf retained an interest in Asia. He collects Asian art and has been a member of the Alabama Bonsai Society for 15 years. It was this connection that regularly brought him to The Gardens, because members tend the bonsai trees on premise. He was then recruited to start a Japanese Garden Society at The Gardens, which he helped do in 2002.

“I’ve been in the Birmingham area for 30 years, and it’s been good to me,” he says. “This is my way of giving back.”

To volunteer contact Karen Larsen, Volunteer Coordinator p 205.414.3962 or e-mail [volunteers@bbgardens.org](mailto:volunteers@bbgardens.org) or [www.bbgardens.org](http://www.bbgardens.org).