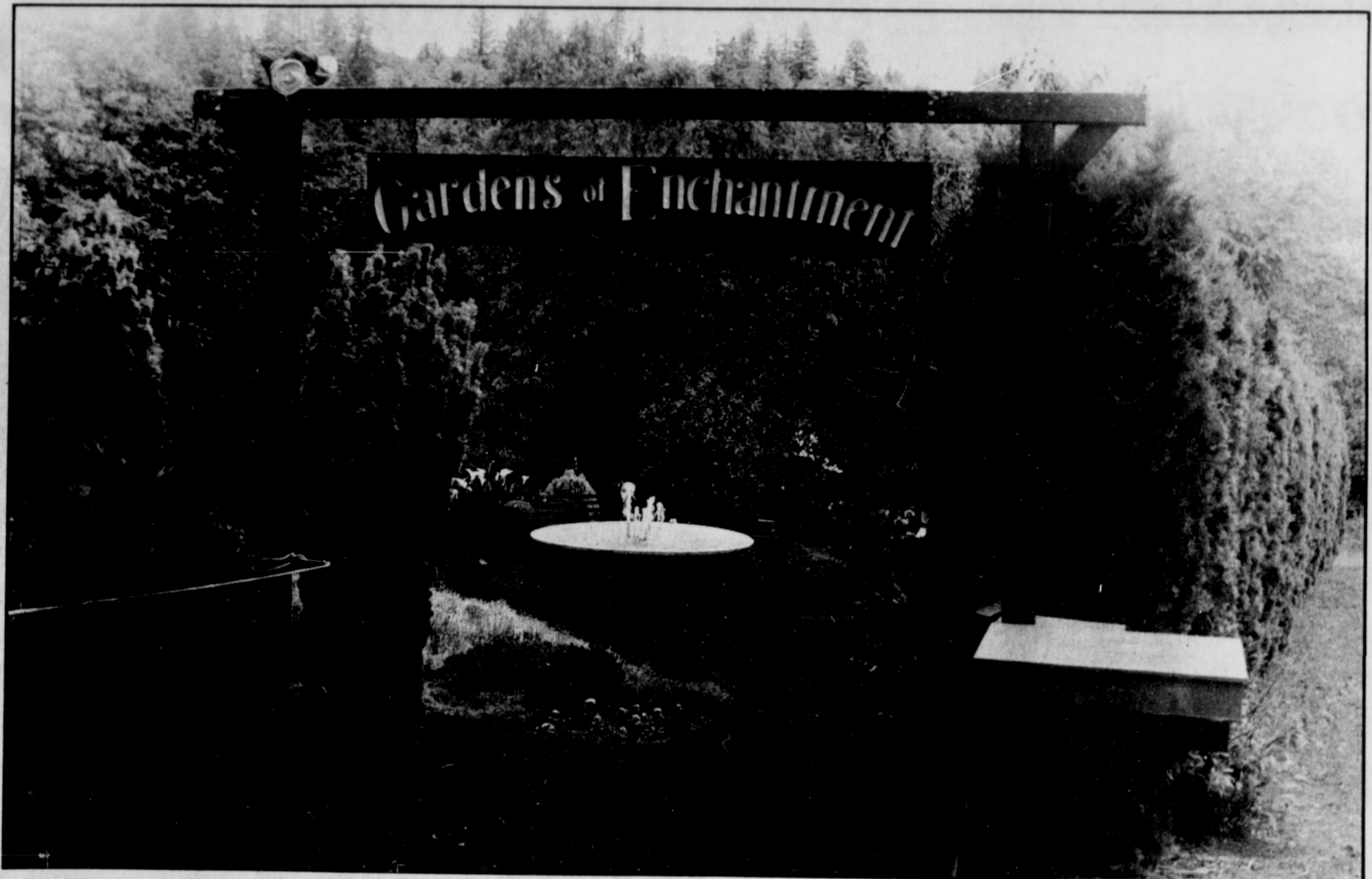




Five Senses Garden

WITHIN THE GARDENS are sections for hearing, taste, fragrance, touch and sight. At the gate, to help the visitors, is a map with raised guides and an audio system to help patrons along the winding, paved

path. This is just one of the many sections included in the park associated with the Oral Hull Foundation for the Blind, Inc.

Oral Hull Park for the Blind

by MARK FLOYD

It has been said that no one sees more than the blind. People with unimpaired vision often have underdeveloped senses compared to their sightless counterparts.

There is no better place to fully experience the five senses than the Gardens of Enchantment at Oral Hull Park located off Ten Eyck Road. The park, especially the Five Senses Garden, is designed for the blind and is associated with the Oral Hull Foundation for the Blind, Inc.

Within the garden are sections for hearing, taste, fragrance, touch and sight. At the entrance is a raised guide map and an audio station to help visitors orient themselves along the winding, paved pathway.

The hearing section consists of three redwood benches around a concrete fountain, where visitors may enjoy the sounds of the water, birds and wind chimes hung nearby. The Morning Glory Poll fountain has vertical nozzles of various diameters shooting water

into the concrete pool. The result is a distinctive tone which an individual with less developed senses might not appreciate.

Adjacent to the Morning Glory Poll is hearing, taste, fragrance, touch and garden of herbs used in flavoring food and drinks. Within the 64-foot bed are 22 species of herbs of both common and unusual varieties. Some of the more recognizable names include thyme, mint, chives, winter cress, sorrel, rosemary, sage, dill and basil. The plants in this section and in all of the garden are labeled in large-type sighted markers as well as braille.

Next on the path is the touch section which emphasizes different textures through the display of rocks, plants and figurines. Such contrasting textures as petrified wood, a mossy rock, a ceramic frog, a fern, and an Oregon Grape plant confront the visitor at the beginning of the touch section. Across the walk is a pussy willow, holly, soft larch, manzanita and rhododendron bush.

The fragrance section changes with each season. In early spring, bulbs and scented shrubs line the walk. Visitors are provided with scents from such flora as witch hazel, mock orange, lilac, sweet alyssum and lilies. For summer and fall bloom, beds of alyssum are planted to join the patch of golden marigolds.

The final sense to be experienced is sight. Although totally blind people cannot visually experience this section, there are some legally blind persons who can distinguish shape and color to make the sight section worthwhile. Hedges and trees provide a background for beds of various flowers which bloom at different times of the year. Over 300 daffodils flower in April; with flowering trees, rhododendrons, and azaleas blooming in May; annuals in summer and a large bed of brilliant orange lilies in the late summer and early fall.

The Gardens of Enchantment is more than just a nature hike.

It also contains a bird sanctuary and an orchard of dwarf fruit trees. It is a

place where handicapped person's can meet and feel that they are living the life of a normal, sighted person. This form of self-enrichment is one of the many objectives of the Oral Hull Park.

Property for the park was donated by Oral Hull in 1962, according to Marie Webb, assistant caretaker of the park, who is blind herself.

"She (Oral Hull) had cancer at the time and didn't think she had long to live," said Mrs. Webb, "she wanted to do something."

"But she lived another eight years — partly, I think because she enjoyed seeing the blind people enjoying the gardens," Mrs. Webb added. "She was a good old gal."

In addition to the Gardens of Enchantment, the park has trailer and camper facilities for sixteen units. Mrs. Webb and her husband, Joe, live on one of the sites. The other spaces are used by visitors who stop by for the weekend or sometimes a week or two. The only requirement for using the spaces is that one of the spouses must be blind, Mrs.

Webb explained.

Due to the number of visitors which number up to 500 for the summer, housing is a top priority.

"We do need a building, some sort of a dormitory," said Mrs. Webb. "Even a unit we can build on to."

Visitors come from as far away as Washington, California, and Idaho to see the park. Although the gardens are certainly one attraction, the overall atmosphere of the park is enough to bring visitors.

One of the park's objectives, as listed in its brochure, is to offer "relaxation in rural setting removed from the usual over-protection of their homes." While this objective applies mainly to the newly blind, it demonstrates the philosophy of users of the park. Blindness is a handicap, but not an incapacitating one.

Activities are enjoyed by the blind as much as the sighted. One of the more heavily used areas of Oral Hull Park is the trout pond, according to Mrs. Webb.

"We have a trout pond that the fellas

especially seem to enjoy," she said. "It's stocked a couple of times a year because they really fish it out."

Events at the park include a lodge meeting the first Saturday of each month, a Christmas party for the blind, and a Fun Day, scheduled for August 6 this year. Fun Day is quite an event, according to Mrs. Webb. One year over 1,000 people attended. The Parkrose Lions Club annually sponsors a chicken dinner for Fun Day. Other organizations have helped as well.

"Fraternal organizations have helped us tremendously," said Mrs. Webb, "especially the Gresham women of Elks. Since 1962, they have contributed about \$30,000. This year it amounted to over \$3,000." Other donations are welcome, she added.

The Webbs were caretakers of Oral Hull Park until 1975 when they resigned because "the job had grown too big for them." They now act as assistants to the caretaker, helping out wherever they can. Mrs. Webb is also chairman of special events and activities.



ALICE BANKSTON wanders down the path to the lower level of Oral Hull Park. At the trail's end is a trout pond which is

stocked at least twice yearly for the park's patrons.



AFTER REACHING the lower level, Mrs. Bankston snips away at a patch of troublesome briars. "It's better to cut

yourself while trimming them than to get cut just wandering down the path."