Friends of Greenhouse Newsletter

Rockefeller Park Greenhouse

AUTUMN 2026



Help keep our gardens blooming

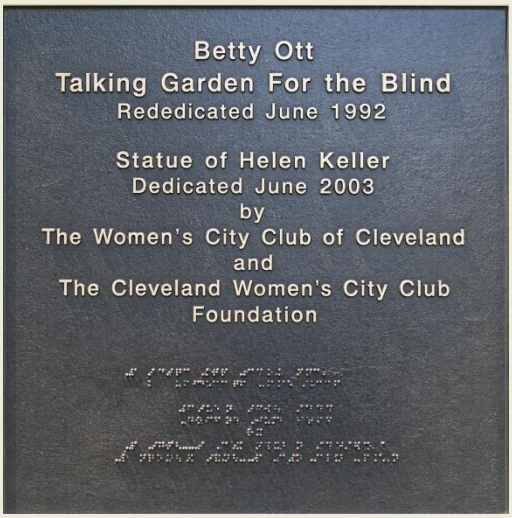




Before ***After***

Betty Ott Garden Renovation

The Friends of Greenhouse has funded the restoration of the Betty Ott Garden tree mosaic. The image on the right is an architectural rendering of the finished project. Work is in progress with completion expected in November.



Plaque in print and braille formats commemorating the support of the Women's City Club and the Cleveland Women's City Club Foundation

Dear Friends of Greenhouse Members,

We have exciting news! Thanks to your support, the tree mosaic in the historic Betty Ott Garden is getting a stunning upgrade. The faded, water-damaged mural (above, left) is being replicated with colorful, warm, and welcoming glass tiles (above, right).

About the Garden & Tree

Nestled in a quiet corner of the Greenhouse grounds, the Betty Ott Garden was designed to be a safe, accessible space for people with impaired vision. The tree, a symbol of resilience and adaptability, invites explorers to 'see' nature through the senses of touch, smell, and sound. Much like the deep-rooted symbolism of the tree itself, we hope this restoration will lead to renewed interest and support for the Betty Ott Garden.

Origins

The Betty Ott Garden is named for pioneering Cleveland broadcast journalist, Betty Steinhauer Ott. Both Ott's



Bronze Statue of Helen Keller in the Betty Ott Garden

The current statue was installed in 2003. The original statue was stolen in 1998. It was recovered years later in the home of an area art collector.

Poinsettia Sale

Our popular Poinsettia Sale returns
December 4th & 5th
10am – 4pm

We will keep you posted!

Pavers in the Willott Iris Garden

Newly installed memorial pavers are ready for viewing in the Willott Iris Garden. The 2026 additions will be added to our virtual tour shortly.

Thanks for your patronage.

father and aunt were blind; this inspired her to create a public space where blind people, regardless of their financial means, could connect with nature safely and independently. She chose the Rockefeller Park Greenhouse as the ideal location because of its accessibility and inclusiveness. In 1965, the garden became a reality and was named the *Betty Ott Talking Garden for the Blind*.

Significance & Status

For decades, the Betty Ott Garden placed Cleveland at the national forefront of accessible design for people with visual impairments. It featured:

- Fragrant and textured plants (like sweet lavender and velvety lamb's ear)
- Peaceful water sounds
- A guided tour system with plant descriptions
- Accessible paths
- Braille signage

Initially funded by an endowment, the garden now depends on charitable donations for its long-term maintenance and sustainability. Unfortunately, donations have dwindled over the years. Without a steady source of funding, the garden has suffered mechanical issues (audio and water feature failures) and botanical setbacks. The garden has also been vandalized; for instance, thieves stole the original prized statue of Helen Keller kneeling at the fabled water pump (see note above).

Preserving the Legacy

Like Betty Ott, the Friends of Greenhouse believes everyone deserves a place to connect with nature. With time and critical funding, the Betty Ott Garden can once again become the retreat its founder envisioned—a safe, accessible, inclusive space where people with impaired vision can immerse themselves in the wonders of nature.

Link here to join, donate, or renew your FOG membership:

Support the Friends of Greenhouse