Color and concern

Spring is a season of contrasts — of cold nights and warm days, of barren branches and budding color. This spring, the contrasts are more stark, as the photos above and below reflect.

In the top photo, Stephen Byrns, president of the Untermyer Gardens Conservancy, wades among the daffodils at that 43-acre park on the morning of Monday, April 6. Byrns was joined by other members of the conservancy’s staff as well as volunteers, including Kathryn Buckley of Yonkers, pictured below.

Wearing gloves and masks, they picked the flowers from among the 30,000 or so surrounding the Temple of Love, a domed structure that overlooks the Hudson River from atop a manmade outcrop of rock.

The water that usually falls from below the temple, then tumbles through a series of pools, was turned off. Inside the park’s walled garden, the canals that represent the Euphrates, Gihon, Pishon, and Tigris rivers were also dry.

The City of Yonkers closed the park to the public on March 20 due to concerns about the spread of the Covid-19 coronavirus. The city also halted the restoration of Temple of the Sky, a large circle of marble columns damaged by decades of water infiltration inside the walled garden.

Despite the closure, nature persists at Untermyer. So do the garden’s caretakers, who transported the daffodils to four healthcare institutions in Yonkers — St. John’s Riverside Hospital, St. Joseph’s Hospital, the Richmond Children’s Center, and Adira at Riverside Rehabilitation.

“During this time of national crisis we feel that it would be a welcome sign of hope at springtime to those living in pain and fear,” Byrns wrote in a statement about the daffodil project. “In particular, we want to show our solidarity with those who are caring for the sick, infirm and aged, and bring some brightness and color into their lives.”
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