



# notes

FROM THE GARDENS



## Messy is Magic: Spring in the Gardens

A publication of  
Monk Botanical Gardens



# From the Development Director

Dear Garden Friends,

Spring has been slow to start this year. But have no fear, it is beginning to bring us those treasured spring ephemerals and warm temperatures. I feel quite lucky to be beginning as the new Gardens' Director as the Gardens begin to ramp up for what is sure to be another excellent year. I feel like I'm growing right in tandem with the Gardens awakening.

I first visited Monk Botanical Garden years ago, long before even living in Wausau. My in-laws thought my spouse and I would enjoy visiting the garden since we were volunteering at community gardens in Madison and both loved the outdoors. The buckthorn blocked the view of the treehouse then. But the Kitchen Potager was brand new and the Memory Circle felt like a mythical oasis. I knew right then that the Gardens was a special place.

Once we moved to Wausau, I made sure to sign my 4 year old twins up for Summer Camp and Sprouts. I felt supported by similar parents attending Babes in the Gardens. Here was a place my whole family could learn and be their messy, muddy selves. It felt a little like home.

Now, I have the pleasure of working as staff with our new Executive Director, Jennifer Plisch, to help connect the members, families, and donors to this special place. I've already begun to hear stories from you about what you love about the Gardens. Stories about the family and friends you've chosen to memorialize forever in the trees, art, and seating nooks spread throughout. Stories about other muddy, bold kids discovering a love of nature. I hope you enjoy reading a few of those stories in this newsletter. I hope it inspires you to reach out and share your personal garden stories with me. I love getting a phone call or email from the members and donors who make the Gardens grow each year.

Sending you Spring vibes,

Danni Lang



Danni Lang, Development Director

## Gardens Staff

- Jennifer Plisch** - Executive Director
- Patrick Murphy** - Facility & Grounds Director
- Kaytie Ruesch** - Events & Programming Director
- Megan Johnson** - Volunteer & Resource Director
- Danni Lang** - Development Director
- Pat Witt** - Garden Supervisor & Horticulturist
- Kari Buck** - Bookkeeper
- Amanda Valencia** - Sprouts Lead Teacher
- Sadie Xiong** - Sprouts Lead Teacher
- Sarah Loth** - Sprouts Assistant Teacher
- Beth Grefe** - Sprouts Assistant Teacher
- Laurn Rammer** - Sprouts Assistant Teacher

## Officers

- Mark Munson**, President
- Susan Lang**, Vice President
- Paul Whitaker**, Secretary
- Jon Plisch**, Treasurer

## Directors

- Paul David, Tabitha Erlandson, Linda Grilley, Tom Monk, Vickie Richmond Hawkins, Tammy Stezenski**

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Follow us!

# RENEW

by Jennifer Plisch

It's time to RENEW and refresh with Booze, Blends & Botany!!! This spectacular event returns for its 7th year. It's been RENEWED to add time at the Gardens (we heard you loud and clear, and couldn't agree more)! RENEWED by increasing to TWO nights of fun! RENEWED to include more blends of tasty and botany focused mocktails! RENEWED to feature the RENEWED space of the former Wausau Club and Wausau Museum of Contemporary Art!!

**Wednesday, July 16 - 5-8 pm**  
at the Gardens AND

**Thursday, July 17 - 5-8 pm**  
at the Wausau Club and  
Wausau Museum  
of Contemporary Art

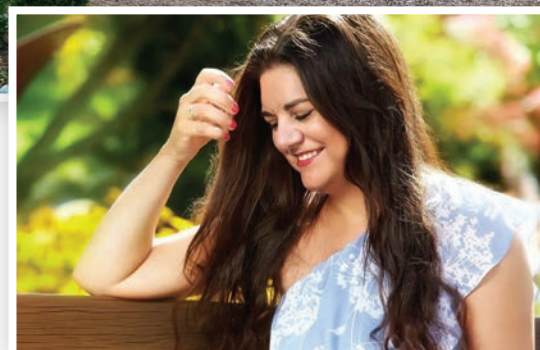
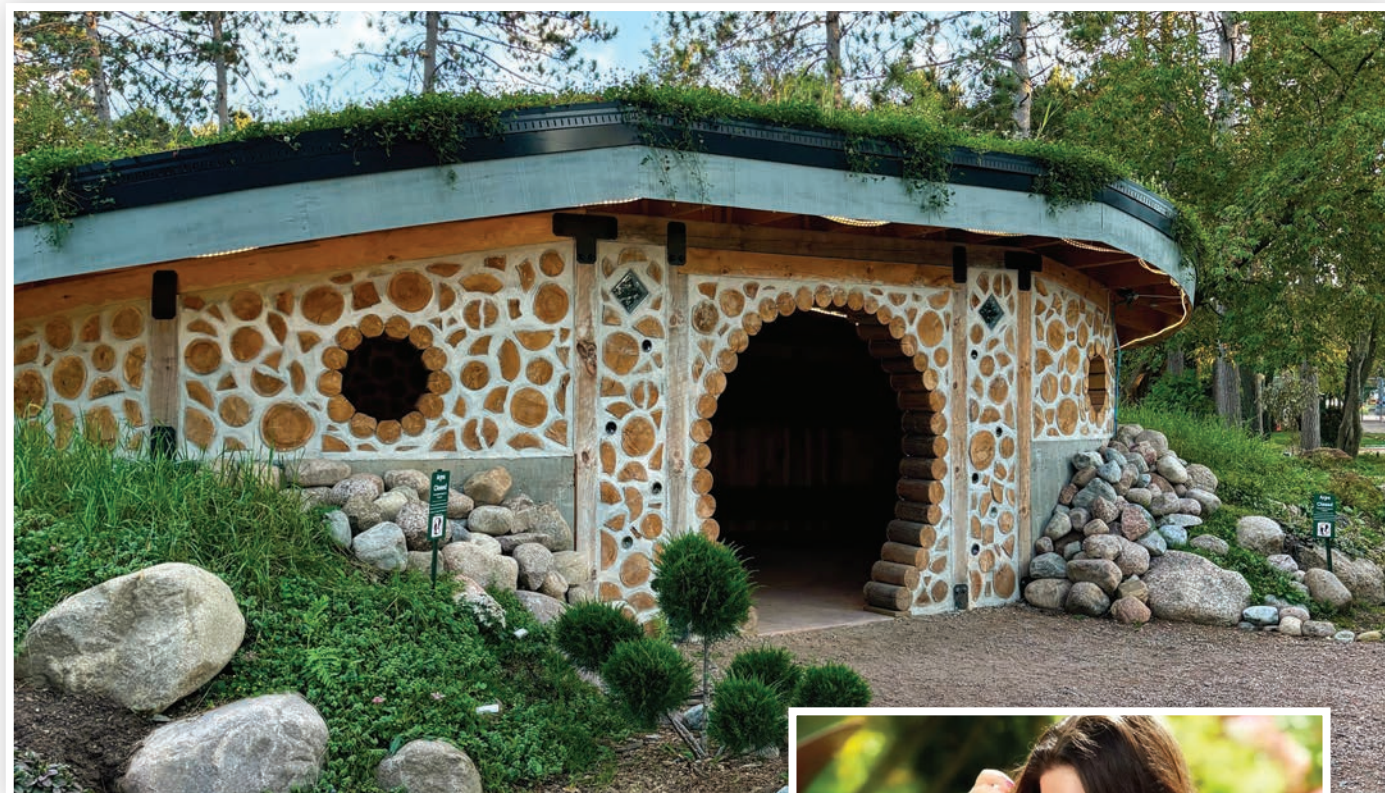
One ticket gets you access to both nights. Registration will be open in May. All funds raised go directly to supporting our mission and programs!

Wednesday evening will be in the RENEWED Gardens. It will feature artful drink-making demonstrations, unique mocktail tastings, and delicious dish sample pairings made by local mixologists and chefs. These will be created with local ingredients, some even right from the Gardens. The evening will offer tours and is family friendly.

Thursday will be your 'sneak peek' into the RENEWED Wausau Club that will soon be available for rentals. This will be a night of curated craft cocktail samples (don't miss the signature cocktail!), blends, and the pairing of delicious bites prepared by food and drink connoisseurs.

We think you'll love seeing what our RENEWED spaces have to offer the community.





## Sara's Storybook Garden

by Jill Falstad

Sara's Storybook Garden is a whimsical, magical place full of colorful flowers with winding paths to jump, skip and dance upon. Have you been there yet? Once you have been, you will want to return often. Take your time to climb aboard the sunken ship and read a book or call for your maties to join you on a trip across the ocean or play on the sandy shore. Maybe next you'll stop at the fairy house or pose for a photo by the huge monarch butterfly. Saving the best for last? Head to the Hobbit House to play with your friends and family or any hobbits you may find there. Visit this special garden – it's for everyone to explore and enjoy.

As with many places, there is a backstory. Sara's Storybook Garden was created in honor of Sara Quirt-Sann who was tragically killed in a mass shooting on March 22, 2017. She was an insightful, gifted and remarkable person who worked as a family law attorney. She was also appointed to serve on countless cases advocating for children as a Guardian Ad Litem. Her integrity, thorough work and passion for representing children set her apart. Ultimately, she was killed because she represented a woman going through a divorce.

Sara was a wonderful person who cared about her clients and the community. Her many interests included reading and gardening. A committee was formed to pursue a garden project to honor Sara and to combine her love of reading, gardening and children. Sara's Storybook Garden is for all people, but especially for children to use their love of stories and books, and their imagination and creativity, to run and play amongst the flowers and beauty of nature. Sara would have been pleased.

Thank you to all the volunteers for countless hours of work to clear this site of buckthorn, grapevine and blackberry plants, and to then build garden beds, plant flowers, and shovel loads of mulch. We are grateful to Jason Reimer and his team for bringing our vision of the Hobbit House to reality. We thank the many people, foundations, businesses and the Marathon County Bar Association who provided funds in support of this project. And a BIG thank you to Monk Botanical Gardens for providing us with the site to fulfill our vision of a child centered garden in honor of Sara.

## Rooted in Learning

Field Trips Cultivate Community at the Gardens

by Kaytie Ruesch

The gentle hum of bees, the vibrant tapestry of blooming flowers, and the rustling leaves underfoot – these are the sensory experiences awaiting students who venture into the peaceful oasis of Monk Botanical Gardens. More than just a picturesque escape, these visits are fertile ground for cultivating crucial community connections, fostering a sense of belonging, and sparking a lifelong appreciation for the natural world.

For many students, a trip to Monk Botanical Gardens offers a unique opportunity to step outside the confines of the classroom and engage with learning in a tangible, multi-sensory way. Curriculum concepts, from plant life cycles to ecological systems, come alive at the Gardens. Guided tours and educational programs, tailored to different age groups, transform abstract ideas into concrete understanding. Students might dissect flowers to learn about pollination, explore the trails to understand ecosystems, or participate in planting activities to grasp the importance of sustainable practices.

However, the impact of these visits extends far beyond academic enrichment. Monk Botanical Gardens is a vital bridge between the younger generation and the wider community. By providing a welcoming and accessible space, the Gardens encourages interaction and shared experiences. For many children, their first encounter with the Gardens on a school trip ignites a sense of belonging, excitedly prompting them to bring family and friends to experience this cherished place.



The Gardens welcomed nearly 2,000 students from over 80 classes in 2024 alone, attracting schools from six counties and solidifying our position as a key field trip destination in the area. Although our field trips are available throughout the year, the enthusiasm of spring typically brings the majority of visitors in April and May. We eagerly anticipate another busy season!



## Perennial Society

Nancy Cedar  
Judy Stevens

Monk Botanical Gardens would like to recognize the people who have included us in their will or estate plans as Perennial Society members. By joining these luminaries of the Gardens, your legacy will live on for generations to come. Every enchanting flower, majestic oak, and soft birdsong will hold your memory.

To learn about your options for adding Monk Botanical Gardens to your estate plans, please email Danni Lang, Development Director, at [dlang@monkgardens.org](mailto:dlang@monkgardens.org)



## Root Society

Tabitha Erlandson  
Vickie Richmond Hawkins  
Danielle Lang  
Carole Machek  
Mary Moen  
Jennifer and Jon Plisch  
Jennifer Reinke

Are you looking for any easy way to support the Gardens? It's fast and simple to set up automatic monthly gifts to Monk Botanical Gardens. Your gifts will provide reliable, ongoing support that keeps your membership up to date and the Gardens blooming! Sign up today at [monkgardens.org/donate-to-the-gardens](http://monkgardens.org/donate-to-the-gardens) and select **Monthly Giving**.

## Be Inspired

by *The Kraemer Family English Garden*

From the outside you will see warm brick walls with a circular "window", beautiful gates and walls of arborvitaes. Inside are symmetrical shrub borders and paths, formal urns and stone benches, a lovely fountain and graceful lawn surrounded by a bodacious perennial and rose border .

We don't approach the needed "temperate" English climate (most of England is zone 7 whereas Wisconsin is zone 5 in the south and only zone 3 up north). Our architect eliminated the climate issue by incorporating hardy and native plants into the English garden concept.

Roses are essential in an English Garden so we have hardy shrub roses that will thrive despite brutal winters. Our Boxwoods are a tough variety, "Chicagoland", and the herbs filling the knot are creeping thyme suited to our climate. Although we have the iconic delphiniums of English fame, we also have native tufted hair grass, goatsbeard, amsonia, and New England Aster, to name just a few!

If you want to create your own English Garden I believe the essential element to strive for is a "view". Find a place for the eye to go to or seek, whether by creating a "room" or vista in a large landscape, or simply a focal point such as a bench, structure or corner bed in a smaller yard.

Additionally, a water feature such as a fountain, pond, or just a little bird bath adds aesthetic appeal, as would a sculpture or special plant.

The "formality" of an English Garden is achieved by symmetry and balance in plants, paths, structures, or all three, easy in any type of yard!

Finally, embrace the classic perennial border by using multiples of the plants you choose, letting them multiply



and fill up your space, remembering to leave yourself access in front and/or back of the beds for maintenance.

Natives such as bee balm or butterfly weed can be used in mass to the same effect as hybrids and exotics. Just respect your sun/shade requirements.

*I am always happy to answer any questions or discuss ideas for your projects so look for me in the Gardens. I'm the gal wearing a ball cap, pruners and white ponytail!*

-Ms. Pat

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Contact Danni Lang, Development Director, at [dlang@monkgardens.org](mailto:dlang@monkgardens.org) to learn how your business sponsorship can make our community thrive at the Gardens



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