



notes

FROM THE GARDENS



A publication of Monk Botanical Gardens
Spring 2022

FEATURED ARTICLE

Celebrating in Color (pg 3)

How strengthening our networks
strengthens our community



Monk
Botanical
Gardens

Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Fellow Gardens Enthusiasts:

As I look outside my window on the warmest day of the year (a whopping 41 degrees), I long for a warm June day at the Gardens.

I imagine the Sprout students elbow deep in the garden bed planting their chosen vegetables and flowers to be harvested throughout the summer and into the fall when they return. Adjacent to them is the blue bird house, placed by Wausau's Birding Club years ago, that has been occupied by a chickadee carefully building its nest—hoping to fill it soon with eggs. As I look out at the Kitchen Garden, I notice a fox kit, wait actually, three fox kits scurrying along the forest edge with their mother.

A garden volunteer looks up just in time to see the kits return to their den. They smile and return to planting a section of the Kitchen Garden beds—I believe that bed will be covered with a diversity of peppers by August. A group of campers runs past me with insect nets, giggling with excitement and talking about what they hope to catch. One of our summer interns says hello, and heads off to the Meditation Garden, gloved up and ready to weed. Then I hear the start of the sprinklers—I hurry off the lawn and stand in the potager, shaking off the spray. I laugh along with the family eating their lunch at one of the picnic tables. I smile to myself and breathe in the fresh air while I think, this is truly Wausau's Happy Place.

Once again, this season is filled with educational workshops for adults, plant sales, summer camps for kids, beautifying the garden spaces, new and favorite events, and an exciting new one sure to become a staple for every Wausau family in October, Blossom of Lights!

As you read through the following pages, I hope they inspire you to daydream about your days at Wausau's Happy Place this season.

See you in the Gardens,

Darcie E Howard



Darcie Howard, Executive Director

GARDENS STAFF

- Darcie Howard - Executive Director
- Tiffany Rodriguez-Lee - Development Director
- Elise Schuler - Education & Events Manager
- Marissa Ashbeck - Horticulture & Grounds Manager
- Krysta Post - Lead Sprouts Preschool Teacher
- Kaytie Rusch - Environmental Educator

Officers

- Nancy Cedar, President
- Susan Lang, Vice-President
- Paul Whitaker, Secretary
- Jon Plisch, Treasurer

Directors

- Sheila Rossmiller, Holly Koepfel,
- Vickie Richmond Hawkins, Sue Matis, Paul David

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Celebrating in Color

How strengthening our networks strengthens our community

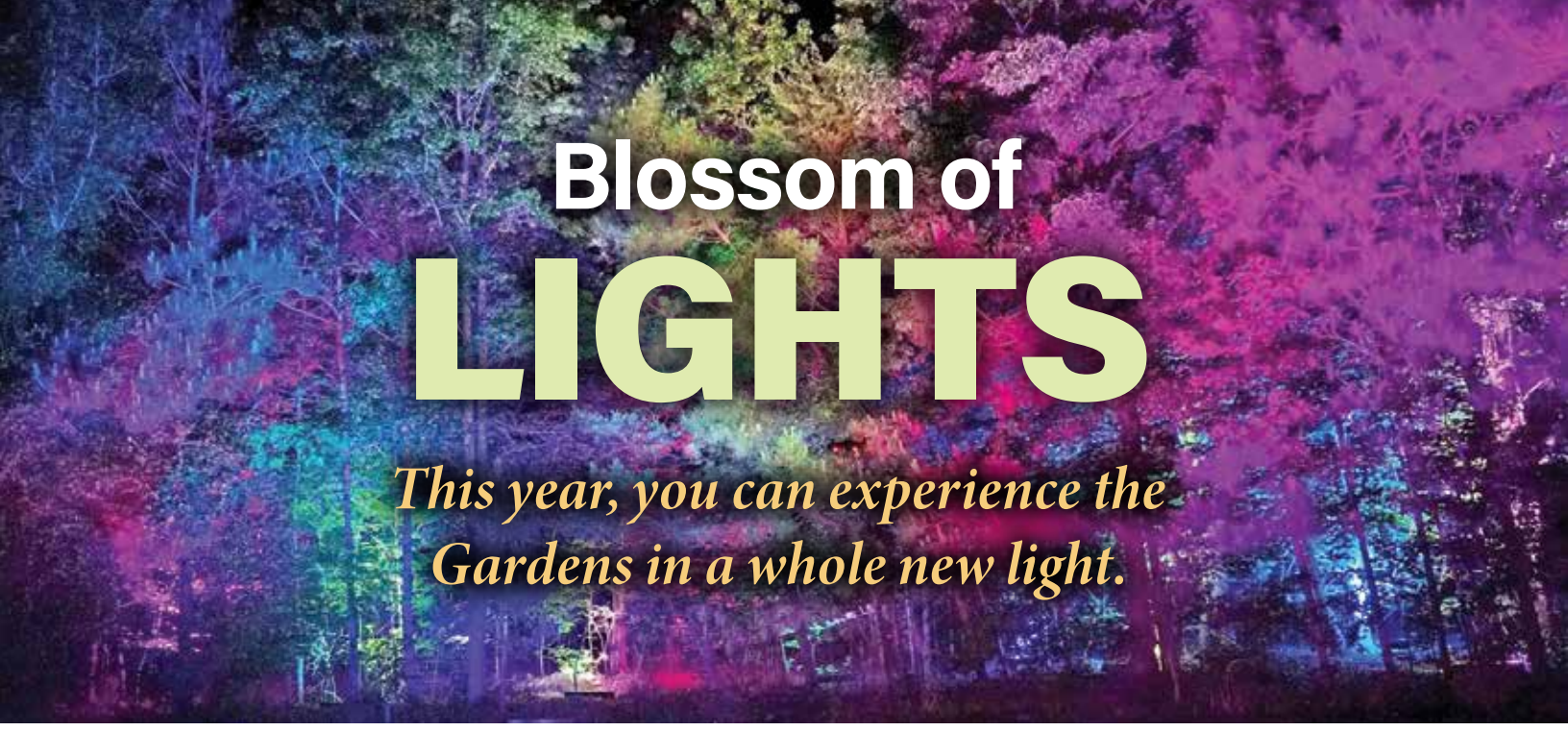
Spanning the Gardens' 30 acres of land, you'll find dozens of varieties of trees. From a sturdy oak to a delicate Ginkgo, many call Monk Botanical Gardens home. To survive and weather the seasons, trees have developed an incredible tool for connection and communication with one another. This language of trees is known as mycorrhizal networks. These underground networks connect plants and trees. They work together, ensuring that each plant remains healthy and fruitful by warning others of potential hazards. These mycorrhizal networks show that they truly act as a community with the well-being of each other front of mind.

The Gardens' mycorrhizal network of partners, donors, volunteers, and visitors works together to strengthen the Gardens' ability to grow and serve thousands of people every year, creating a symbiotic relationship that benefits the Gardens and the Wausau community. This year, our network is growing, ensuring people of all ages and abilities can find joy and solace in connecting with the natural world. We'll continue strengthening partnerships with organizations like Headstart, Wausau School District, Boys and Girls Club of Wausau, and Our House Senior Living Center while building new partnerships with the Hunger Coalition of Marathon County and the Indian Society of Central Wisconsin.

With budding partnerships on the horizon come opportunities for new and unique ways to experience the Gardens. This June, we'll be hosting Holi, the Festival of Colors! The Indian Society of Central Wisconsin will be taking over the Gardens for a day of color and celebration, open to all ages. This event hasn't been held since 2019, and we are grateful that they have chosen to host it at the Gardens. This event is a beautiful way to experience a traditional Indian celebration while basking in the warmth of summer, with splashes of color, kite flying, dancing, and food. Holi is well known for its brilliance of eye-catching colors, as participants throw brightly-colored clouds of powder and paint their faces. Dr. Swati Biswas, one of the lead planners of the event, says to prepare to learn Bollywood dancing and enjoy Indian street food. The Indian Society of Central Wisconsin and the Gardens welcomes the public with open arms to enjoy this age-old festival, a joyful celebration of spring.

Thank you to our network—your partnerships strengthen the Gardens and our community.





Blossom of LIGHTS

This year, you can experience the Gardens in a whole new light.

We're excited to launch Wausau's first-ever walking light show!

This immersive experience for all ages is sure to delight with thousands of lights, impeccably lit walking trails, a dazzling pond, interactive displays, and illuminated botanicals. You can experience the magic of Blossom of Lights Thursday through Saturday evenings for the entire month of October 2022. In addition to the captivating light displays, guests will have an opportunity to enjoy food trucks and drinks. Blossom of Lights will truly be a memorable, family-friendly walking event.

This brand new event will be an annual affair, growing and changing every year. We're putting an artistic twist into the Gardens while keeping the focus on the already beautiful and natural elements on site.

Wausau's Happy Place is about to be a whole lot brighter, we hope you join us and make new exciting memories in the Gardens!

You can get involved by sponsoring this event! Contact Tiffany about this and other sponsorship opportunities throughout the year at trodriguezlee@monkgardens.org

EXPERIENCE THIS YEAR AS A GARDENS MEMBER!

Join the Monk Botanical Gardens member community and enjoy special benefits and privileges while helping grow this unique and developing treasure rooted in Central Wisconsin. As a member you'll be the first to learn about our classes, workshops, events, and volunteer opportunities, as well as receive special pricing!

Join today by scanning the code:



Melody & Magnolias - by Elise Schuler

One cold February day, I was lucky enough to teach our Sprouts Garden Preschool class. Every winter morning, we meet the students at the front gate. I watched our 3-4 year-old Sunflower Sprouts class confidently go from the drop-off point to the backpack rack at the yurt to store their things, then immediately tumble back outside to play on the snowplow pile, as is their usual routine. After a couple of minutes of climbing, sliding, and collecting snowballs, Ms. Kaytie reminded the students to choose their job for the week on the whiteboard. Each student took turns finding their name and moving it onto the job they would be responsible for: calendar helper, tree of the week, letter of the week, weather helper. Ms. Kaytie gave a five-minute warning, and five minutes later, the group was off on a walk, taking advantage of the warm afternoon sunshine.

The walk took us by the kaleidoscope where students practiced taking turns, Ava carried snowballs the entire

way, and Lilah practiced remembering to keep sticks down and away from friends, so no one gets poked. While along the pond, I stopped to admire and touch the buds on the magnolia tree. Melody, remembering an earlier lesson about magnolia tree buds, reminded me, "Please don't hurt them, okay?" I assured her I would be gentle.

Not having taught the students since last fall, I was overwhelmed with pride, seeing the growth in the students' confidence and awareness. Each day we get the honor of watching our students continue to grow, become more independent, learn to work as a team, and become confident and curious explorers while caring for each other and the environment. Every student had mastered putting on their winter coats (no small task for a 3-year-old). Each student knew where to go throughout the entire Gardens. They could easily be tour guides to anyone who would follow--what fun that would be!

Staff Spotlight

As the Gardens continue to grow, so does our staff. Welcome to our newest team member, Krysta!

Krysta Post
Lead Sprouts Garden Preschool Teacher

Krysta Post's adventures in environmental education have taken her across the country through forests and wetlands, exploring tide pools and stalactite-filled caverns. During a break in her undergraduate studies, she interned for residential environmental education programs at Acadia National Park in Maine and Pine Mountain Settlement School in Kentucky before spending a summer as a Wilderness Ranger for Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest in Washington.

After completing her B.A. in Anthropology she spent three seasons as a field archaeologist with the Wisconsin State Historical Society. She renewed her passion for Environmental Education as a Graduate Naturalist at Wolf Ridge Environmental Learning Center in Minnesota, receiving a post-Baccalaureate Certificate in Environmental Education from the University of Minnesota-Duluth and a professional Naturalist certification.



Krysta Post

She continued both teaching and learning as an Education Specialist at Cave of the Mounds National Natural Landmark.

Today she continues to share her enthusiasm for outdoor exploration with little learners, fostering a sense of wonder and appreciation for the environment while embracing each and every teachable moment using the National Geographic Framework. When she is not outside teaching children Krysta enjoys going on "safari" in the orchard with her kiddos and creating recipes in the kitchen using food she's grown.



Preparing Your Garden for Spring

by Marissa Ashbeck

If you are ready to get your hands in the soil, start prioritizing your projects throughout the garden. If your yard is thawed and you can't keep yourself out of your gardens any longer, here are some spring preparation ideas.

After the snow is gone, we are all guilty of trying to clean up all of last year's plant debris. If you are looking to clean up your landscape, please consider leaving your plant debris standing until daytime temperatures reach 50 degrees to allow for beneficial insect eggs to hatch that may be lying dormant on your plant debris. They take up residence in your plant material over the winter and start emerging once temperatures increase. If you cannot wait to start cleaning up your beds, consider leaving the plant material nearby to provide an opportunity to emerge near your pollinator habitat. There are so many other preparations that can be worked on in the milder days ahead.

Garden Steward Program

To recognize and educate our dedicated volunteers, we are hosting a new volunteer training program, the Garden Stewardship Program. For volunteers interested in immersing themselves in the history of the Gardens, tours, garden maintenance, plant identification, insect identification, and bird identification, we have an excellent opportunity for you to serve the gardens. These preparatory classes will be required along with 50 hours of volunteer service May-September.

Other spring gardening tasks include raking, amending soils, pruning, mulching, fertilizing, and planting once the threat of frost is gone later in May. These are simple projects that can kick start your landscape for the growing season. Start by raking off any leaves you may have missed on your lawn from fall to prevent them from smothering your turf. At this time, you can rake off any debris or gravel left from plowing as well. The dead plant material can easily be incorporated into your garden soil as an amendment.

The decomposing leaves and plant debris will continue to decompose and create nutrient-rich compost for your soil. Once the soil is thawed, you can rototill or cultivate the decomposing plant debris into your soils. By amending and cultivating the soil, you are preparing your beds for the busy growing season ahead by providing extra nutrients and aerating the soil. If you still need to prune this spring, remember that if you prune anything that blooms in spring, you run the risk of cutting off its dormant buds. It is better to prune spring-bloomers after they blossom.

Early spring is a great time to lay your mulch since the plants are just starting to emerge, and you can maneuver through the garden easily. You can spread granular fertilizers in spring to ensure they have time to slowly release into the soil. A great fertilizer to prevent deer and rabbits is millorganite. It has a pungent smell that wards off many garden pests, and fertilizes at the same time! Another nitrogen-packed granular fertilizer is corn gluten meal. It is used as a natural alternative to pre-emergent herbicides as well. It is safe for humans and pets, so give it a try. As the threat of frost diminishes and the temperatures hold above freezing, you can start to think about planting cold crops in your vegetable gardens. You can usually start these plants by seed, or plant hardened-off seedlings and protect them using floating row covers.

There are so many projects to do during the growing season, so why not start them early? Enjoy the milder weather ahead!

The specialized training will help in the Gardens' development and goals. Training will start on Thursday, May 5th. If interested, email mashbeck@monkgardens.org

Throughout the training, you will:

Find Your Roots - Find Your Passion

Lend a Branch - Offer a Helping Hand

Set Your Buds - Learn Something New and Exciting



Volunteer Spotlight

Ron Grilley, Volunteer of the Year

Ron Grilley knows buckthorn. Or rather, he knows how to remove it.

Working with other volunteers for weeks to clear the invasive species was the start of his work on the Master Gardeners Shade & Hosta Garden. The Garden took planting, mulching, weeding and watering to get ready to open for the public, and Ron was instrumental in all of it. He is a most deserving recipient of the Monk Botanical Garden's 2021 Volunteer of the Year.

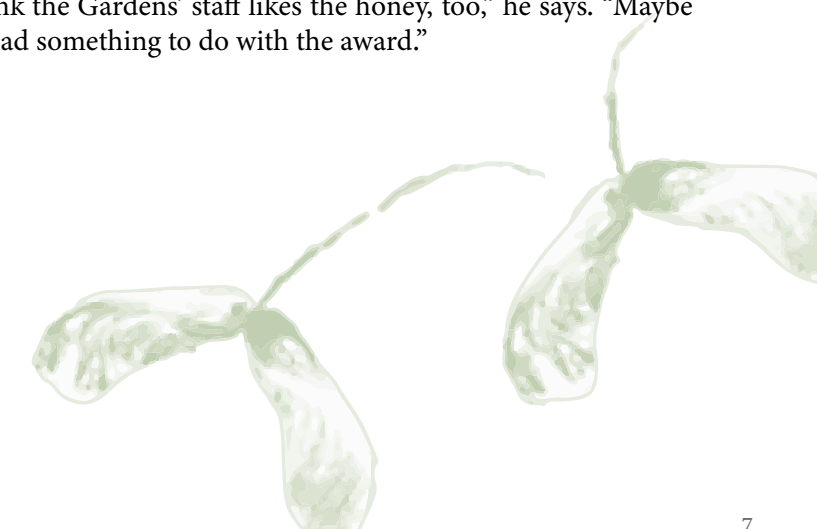
"Take a look," he says of the cleared area at the Garden, "I couldn't see two feet in front of me when we started. You'll notice a big difference."

Ron, who admits he probably got involved in the Garden when his wife Linda was president of the board a few years back, is a doer on other projects, as well. With Paul Whitaker and other volunteers, he helped build the new yurt that sits alongside the Kitchen Garden Potager, and serves at the schoolhouse for the Gardens' preschool program.

And he's shared his love and concern for bees. "Having bee hives is important for the Gardens' plants; they need the pollinators," Ron explains.

Ron is one of many in the area working to keep the threatened hives healthy and thriving. For the last two summers, he's set up and tended the beehives. He's demonstrated beekeeping to 3-5 year olds and their parents at the Gardens.

"I think the Gardens' staff likes the honey, too," he says. "Maybe that had something to do with the award."



SUMMER CAMP IN THE GARDENS



Summer Camp in the Gardens offers children a unique outdoor experience. We offer a variety of themed, hands-on activities tailored to a specific age camper. Campers will learn about relevant environmental subjects at the Gardens through hands-on activities, work together with their peers, and spend time outdoors!

For camp descriptions and registration information, visit www.givebutter.com/summercamp2022

Half-Day Camp Fee and Schedule:

\$140 non-member/\$120 member

Schedule: Monday - Friday • 8:00 am - 12 pm

Grossology: June 6-10 (9-12 yo)

Aquapalooza: June 20-24 (7-8 yo)

Somewhere Over the Rainbow: June 27-July 1 (5-6 yo)

Tracks & Trails: July 11-15 (7-8 yo)

Where the Wild Things Are: July 18-22 (5-6 yo)

Budding Botanists: July 25-29 (7-8 yo)

It's a Bug's Life: August 1-5 (5-6 yo)

Guardians of the Gardens: August 8-12 (9-12 yo)

Full-Day Camp Fee and Schedule:

\$200 non-member/\$180 member

Dropoff: 8-8:30 am • Lunch: 12 pm • Pick up: 3-3:30 pm

Wild Wisconsin: July 5-8 (9-12 yo)



* NEW THIS SEASON *



This year, we have new welded bike racks coming from Northcentral Technical College Welding Department and Alternative High School! The NTC welding camp is also creating welded animals and critters to finish our "What is Above and Below You?" sculpture installation.



We'll be planting nearly 200 plant varieties in the Kitchen Garden! These fruits, vegetables, and herbs will be harvested and donated weekly to the Marathon County Hunger Coalition, helping ensure our community has access to fresh produce.



To enhance our preschool play space and create unique learning opportunities, we are establishing 3,000 square feet of Bee Lawn and around 1,000 square feet of Butterfly Prairie around the yurt!



Near the entrance of the Gardens, we'll be planting over 1,200 varieties of annuals to create new curated displays.

Board Spotlight



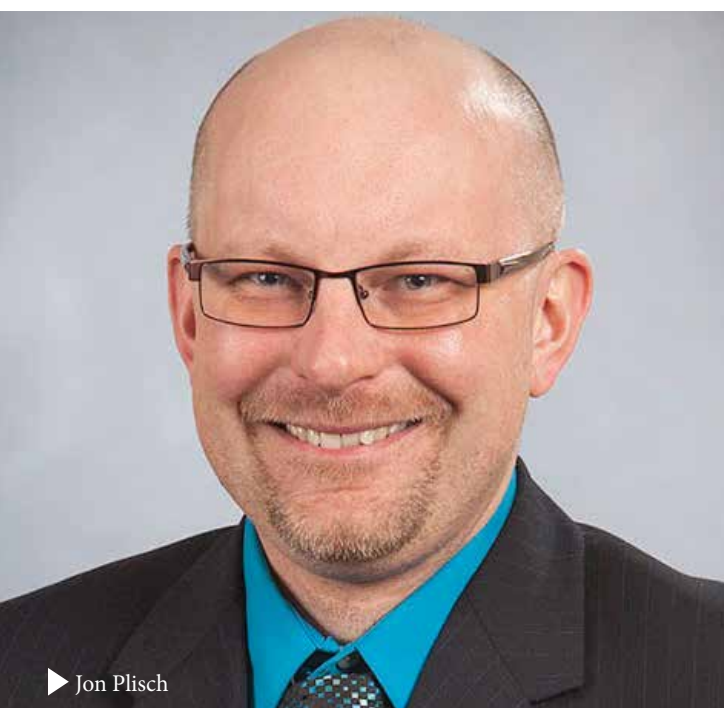
▶ Holly Koepfel

Holly Koepfel

Holly Koepfel, Southern Regional Vice President at Covantage Credit Union in Wausau, believes her connections with credit union members will help people in the community get to know the Monk Botanical Gardens. “People are looking for new things to do in the community, and new ways to enjoy the outdoors” she says. “I think I can bring the Gardens into the conversations I have with them.”

Holly is quite familiar with the Gardens. “We did a family photoshoot there,” she says. “The whole family, my parents, my family, a big group. The Gardens were beautiful. I fell in love with it.”

“I think with our great staff and board members we can build even more in the next 5-10 years and bring new people to the Gardens. It’s great for learning and great for health. It’s just a nice place to go.”



▶ Jon Plisch

Jon Plisch

Jon Plisch brings what he calls “a fresh set of eyes with an outsider’s view” to the Monk Botanical Gardens’ board of directors. The Senior Financial Analyst for Greenheck Fan, Jon, joined the Gardens’ board in October. “I’m excited to be part of the team,” he says. “I’m looking forward to serving.”

Jon took an interest in the Gardens after he and his wife Jennifer talked about board position openings, and she encouraged him to apply based on visits she had to the Gardens. “She really liked it and introduced me to it,” he says.

“I was impressed with the Kitchen Garden and the Treehouse,” he says. “I had a great tour with Sheila Rossmiller and Nancy Cedar. There was a good vibe there.”

Jon has spent well over two decades with Wausau-area businesses and feels he can bring that business sense to the board, as well as a vision for the future.

“We have great people on the board,” he says. He’s new, but he’s thinking ahead. “Over the next five to 10 years, I believe we can take the Gardens from Wausau’s best-kept secret to one of its gems,” he says. “Like the 400 block, it can become a staple of our community.”

SPRING & SUMMER PROGRAMS

After School in the Gardens

March 15 - May 26

Tuesdays, Wednesdays, & Thursdays • 4:00 - 6:00 pm

After a day in the classroom, let your kids play in the Gardens, explore and learn about nature with the Gardens’ education staff. At the Gardens, kids can climb trees, catch bugs, look for animal tracks, build forts, care for a garden, prepare a meal, and learn about the natural world, all with the guidance of an experienced environmental educator.

Tots In the Garden

Tuesdays in May - August • 10:00 - 11:00 am

Every week is a new nature-themed topic to explore. Learn about plants, birds, bugs, and the tools you can use to explore nature with your 3-5 year old. Every session includes an activity or craft and story.

Garden Design Workshops

May 2 & August 1 • 6:00 - 7:30 pm

The Gardens’ Horticulturist, Marissa Ashbeck, will introduce you to garden design concepts, give you all the details on the plants available at our plant sale, and how best to incorporate them into your existing or new garden space. With all the new knowledge you learn from Marissa, attendees will have the first opportunity to order from the spring plant sale at the end of the workshop!

Spring Plant Sale

Member Ordering: May 3 - 5

**Community Ordering: May 6 - 20
(or ordering ends when sold out)**

Plant Pickup: May 25 • 5:00 - 7:00 pm at the Gardens

Help us kick off the season with the best plant sale in Wausau and support the Gardens with your spring planting purchases! Order your plants online, selecting from a wonderful variety of perennials to brighten your home gardens.

Garden Tours

Saturdays in June-July • 10:00 am & 2:00 pm

Saturdays on August 6 & 20 • 10:00 am

Saturdays on September 10 & 24 • 10:00 am

Learn more about the Gardens through a one-hour tour of the grounds! Learn the history of the Gardens, a bit about each unique garden space, and get a glimpse into the Gardens’ future plans. Walks are led rain or shine and are entirely outdoors. Please dress for the weather and meet at the main gate.

Theatre in the Gardens

July 16 - Peter Pan

The Secret Garden - August 12 & 13

Sleepy Hollow - October 29

Theatre in the Gardens returns with all-new plays. This year, we’ll feature two walking plays conducted throughout the garden. Out of the Woods Theatre will lead participants through magical arrays of scenes during Peter Pan’s and Sleepy Hollow’s viewings. We’re also offering one weekend of The Secret Garden in the event lawn for a seated play. These performances are great for the entire family to enjoy!

Booze & Botany

Thursday, July 21 • 6 - 8:00 pm

Booze & Botany returns for its fourth year! This event features local bartenders, mixologists, and chefs. Enjoy various cocktails, mocktails, and sample dishes curated and paired specially for the event. This makes for the perfect summer outing!

Yoga in the Gardens

Weekly, June - July • 6:00 - 7:00 pm

Breathe in the fresh air as you practice yoga with various local instructors in the Gardens.

Members Only Pizza Night

Thursday, August 25 • 5:00 - 8:00 pm

Take advantage of your Gardens’ membership with a night out of great drinks, music, and fresh wood-fired pizza! Polito’s General Manager Dan Sosnowski will be stretching the dough for your pizza, and you can choose fresh toppings right from the kitchen garden! Enjoy your pizza, wine, local Whitewater beer, and music from a local artist.

Fall Plant Sale

Member Ordering: Aug 2 - 4

**Community Ordering: May 5 - 19
(or ordering ends when sold out)**

Plant Pickup: Aug 24 • 5:00 - 7:00 pm at the Gardens

Support the Gardens and add some fall color to your yard with new perennials, shrubs, or add some some annuals like mums or flowering kale! Order your plants online and pick them up at the Gardens.



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