



notes

FROM THE GARDENS



A publication of Monk Botanical Gardens

Spring 2023

FEATURED ARTICLE

Twenty Years in the Making. (pg 3)

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feature article would go here.



Letter from the Board President

Hello Garden Friends,

It's hard to believe that it's been 20 years since the Robert W. Monk Botanical Gardens seed was planted; we had acres of beautiful donated land, a master plan, and many ideas. Some said it was impossible. The original 2003 board begged to differ! This edition of our newsletter includes a walk down memory lane of how the Gardens have been shaped the past two decades, and I hope you find it as impressive and informative as I do.

What a community effort we've witnessed in the past two decades; our staff and volunteers have turned Wausau's Best Kept Secret into a year-round destination by educating, engaging, and inspiring everyone who enters the garden gates. Here are a few ways we are doing that at the moment:

- Sarah's Storybook Garden will be completed this year and will inspire everyone who is young at heart.
- Sprouts Preschool is expanding and will continue to educate children as the only outdoor school in the region.
- Summer Camp and Blossom of Lights will continue to heighten our engagement with Wausau residents and surrounding communities.
- Our volunteer list continues to grow, and these selfless people are the biggest inspiration at the Gardens!
- Our staff remains a force in educating our visitors, gardeners, and others looking to learn more about their natural surroundings.
- Speaking of our staff, a huge "congratulations!" and "thank you!" to our Executive Director, Darcie Howard, and our Education & Events Manager, Elise Schuler, on their 5 year anniversaries at the Gardens!

As I walk the Gardens in 2023, I'm thoroughly impressed by what our community has done in the past 20 years, and I look forward to 20 more years of the Monk Botanical Gardens making an impact on everyone who walks our beautiful paths. Sure, the Gardens are a place for blooming, but that's not limited to plants and flowers. We believe what was once "Wausau's Best Kept Secret" is now a source of inspiration, education, and engagement for all who are looking to better themselves in one way or another.

See you in the Gardens!

Susan Lang



Susan Lang, Board President

GARDENS STAFF

Darcie Howard - Executive Director
 Linda Schill - Development Manager
 Elise Schuler - Education & Events Manager
 Marissa Ashbeck - Horticulture & Grounds Manager
 Megan Johnson - Volunteer Coordinator & Administrative Assistant
 Krysta Post - Lead Sprouts Preschool Teacher
 Sarah Loth - Assistant Sprouts Preschool Teacher
 Alicia Reimann - Assistant Sprouts Preschool Teacher
 Kaytie Roettiger - Environmental Educator
 Tyrone Lane - Groundskeeper

Officers

Susan Lang, President
 Ann Lucas, Vice-President
 Paul Whitaker, Secretary
 Jon Plisch, Treasurer

Directors

Paul David, Holly Koeppel, Ann Lucas, Jody Maier,
 Mark Munson, Vickie Richmond Hawkins,
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Twenty Years in the Making



Two decades ago, an "accidental trespassing" resulted in the Gardens concept being born.

As Darla Zastrow was enjoying a sunny day with her mom having a picnic at what she thought was a public park, a man in his 70s rode up to them in his golf cart, asking, "What are you doing on my land?" As the man, Robert W Monk III looked closer; he realized he went to high school with Darla's mother. As the conversation continued, Mr. Monk told Darla he wanted his land to be an educational botanical garden. Darla, a biology teacher at UWMC, suggested that he begin discussions with the UWMC Foundation. The concept of an educational botanical garden for Wausau was born.

In 2003, the non-profit Robert W. Monk Gardens was incorporated, and the Board was created. For the next fourteen years, the Gardens were developed and maintained by a group of dedicated volunteers, many of whom are still involved. These volunteers worked tirelessly to raise funds and implement the Master Plan created in 2005. They successfully installed the Memory Circle and the Treehouse, planted trees for the Wildflower Woods, and completed Phase I of the Meditation Garden and the Kitchen Potager with an attached garden and event lawn. They allowed the public to explore the curated and wild parts of the land and provided events to attract more visitors.

In 2017, the Board hired me as its first full-time employee and Executive Director. Since then, the Gardens has grown exponentially from the number of volunteers and staff to curated gardens, events, and programming, to financial support. The Board has also gone through a significant shift

from a working Board to a leadership Board, providing the Gardens with the connections and resources to increase its donations, memberships, and grants while developing policies and clear direction for the future.

Because of you - our volunteers, donors, and members - the Gardens has become a leader in environmental education and opened Marathon County's first nature-based preschool in 2021. We have expanded the gardens planted by volunteers, created new gardens, and built a yurt and nature play space. We've also grown our staff to nine and, in 2022, hosted an incredible 64,000 visitors.

We are no longer "Wausau's best-kept secret." The days of being a hidden gem are gone, as the word is getting out that we are a flourishing garden space everyone can enjoy. The dream devised in 2003 is about to come to fruition. It's time to build a Visitor and Education Center, and Phase I, Garden Enhancements, of the three-phase plan will be implemented shortly, thanks to your support and vision.

As you visit us this season, be on the lookout for additions, renovations, and changes, and know because of your financial support and donated expertise, you helped to make Robert W. Monk III's vision come true. Thank you!

See the entire timeline of the last twenty years:
monkgardens.org/20years



ENGAGE



The Dirt: Take the Pollinator Challenge!

Written by Firstname Lastname

Can you imagine a world without fragrant flowers, sweet fruit, almonds, or honey? Bees and other pollinators like birds and butterflies are at the heart of our survival.

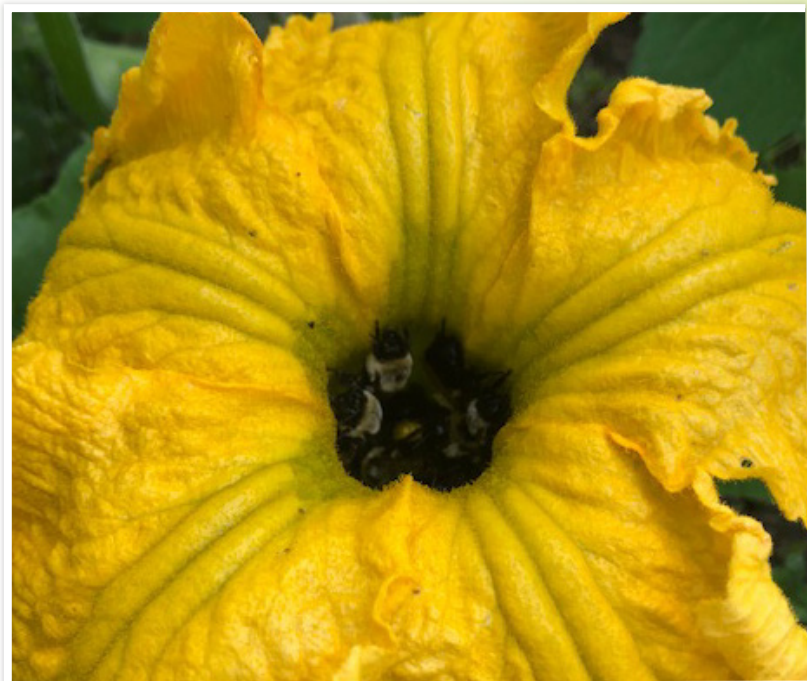
Bees, for example, pollinate 30% of the food we eat, and native bees pollinate 80% of the world's flowering plants. Climate change, habitat loss, pesticides, and disease are all factors affecting the population of our pollinators. How can you help? Take our Pollinator Challenge and create a pollinator-friendly garden this spring.

To attract pollinators, you must create an environment with food and water available all season long. You can achieve this by planting an array of native perennial plants and trees (did you know that bees get most of their nectar from trees?) with various colors, fragrances, and bloom times. These perennial plants will come back every year and naturalize to create a landscape that entices pollinators to make it their home.

Don't forget the water. Fill a bird bath or bowl with water and pebbles so the bees and butterflies have something to stand on as they rehydrate. And remember, synthetic pesticides are extremely harmful to bees, butterflies and birds, so try and use organic or natural solutions to keep away pests.

This year the Gardens will plant over 500 native perennials in the Wildflower Woods, expand the butterfly garden at Sprouts Garden Preschool, and create a pollinator plant collection in the upcoming phases of Sara's Storybook Garden.

We look forward to seeing your new gardens this year! Share photos of your hard work on our Facebook Page or send them to mashbeck@monkgardens.org.



Where can you buy native perennials that are good for pollinators? At our Spring Plant Sale this May. Member ordering starts May 2nd, and public ordering begins May 5th. Visit monkgardens.org/plant-sales/ for plant listings and pricing. Great way to support the Gardens and pollinators!

If you want to create a buzz-worthy landscape, but need help figuring out where to start, consider a Landscape Consultation. Visit monkgardens.org/services/landscape-consulting/ for more information.

Interested in learning even more about pollinators? Check out these resources: The Bee Conservancy, thebeeconservancy.org/, Pollinator Plant guide, www.pollinator.org/guides, and UMN Extension extension.umn.edu/lawns-and-landscapes/flowers-pollinators.



EDUCATE

THE MASTER OF THE MUD KITCHEN

Written by Firstname Lastname

On a cold February day, a new student, 3-year-old Arlo, walked in wearing a thick black hat that covered his head and ears. His wariness was evident as his bright blue eyes and brown curls peered through his covered head.

After introductions and settling in, quiet and hesitant, Arlo walked over to the snow hill where his new classmates pretended to be otters as they slid down the snow-covered hill. Arlo chose just to watch.

For the next month, Arlo slowly began to open up. He was quiet and shy but learned the daily routine quickly and was a great listener. As the warm weather crept in, Arlo found his niche. He became the master of the mud kitchen. The more mud he could get, the better. Playing restaurant, Arlo would create various meals for his "customers," serving his classmates who would return daily for the newest meal concoction. By the end of the semester, Arlo was leading his classmates and now friends, on wonder walks and play activities.

"Arlo has grown so much since starting Sprouts. His love for his friends, teachers, nature and himself has grown immensely. He is now a confident little boy with the biggest heart," his parents, Brie and Tristan, gleamed as they continued to explain. "We know part of that confidence and love for others has been guided by the love from Sprouts. We have been blessed and will forever be thankful for the opportunity to be a part of the Sprouts family."

Arlo's experience is like so many of our Sprouts students. The uniquely crafted outdoor education program encourages and challenges students with daily activities that help them learn to listen to each other, try out being a leader or being part of a team, work out disagreements, celebrate accomplishments, support each other and assess risks. Building these soft skills sets them up for success, not only for kindergarten but for life.



This is Arlo's last year with Sprouts. While we will miss his bright blue eyes and mud meals, we are confident he will continue to grow and be exceptional no matter where the next adventure takes him.



INSPIRE



That “Five Star” Feeling

Written by Firstname Lastname

“Mr. Monk gave Wausau a great jewel.”

This is just one of many five-star reviews you’ll find with a quick Google search of Monk Botanical Gardens. But more often than we care to admit, new visitors to the Gardens and online reviewers alike share that they’ve never heard of us before.

“I had no idea Wausau had a botanical garden; this place is breathtaking and so quiet and quaint.” “It’s a hidden gem!”

After 20 years of existence, how can this be? I suppose there’s truth in the saying the greatest secrets are always hidden in the most unlikely places.

On the flip side, we’re overwhelmed with reassurance and inspired by the reactions of our friends and supporters like you, when folks finally do get to know us and ultimately have wonderful things to say. The reviews don’t lie...

“Truly a gem. Enjoy an outdoor kitchen, music, vegetable gardens, yurt, tree house, trails, flower gardens, native plant gardens and activities for kids. Enjoyment for all ages.”

“A beautiful place for hiking, snowshoeing or sitting to contemplate, any season of the year.”

“Gentle walk along beautiful vegetation. Definitely soothing. Love the memorials attached to many of the plants and milestones. Looking for a walk in nature, this is worth it. There’s an actual garden which encourages the growth of sustainable substance and everlasting friendship.”

Stop me if you’ve heard this before. We’re also “a great treasure for the city,” “a great escape,” “a lovely place to connect with nature.” We’re only “minutes from home,” “this place is surreal,” and don’t forget about our “beautiful pavilion.” The Gardens are “a lovely place to take a stroll. Come picnic here sometime.”

We know this. You know this. So let’s start sharing this well-kept, juicy little secret together! How can you help? Spread the word about our shared destination for inspiration!

On the back of your newsletter, you’ll find a list of spring/summer programs and events. Add them to your calendar and then share that page with a friend. Now take it one step further. We encourage you to bring someone new to the Gardens this spring - a child, a loved one, or a neighbor. Walk side-by-side, hold hands amongst the trees, breathe in the cool fresh air, be entertained by the squirrels scurrying from limb to limb, and be inspired by the resilience of the trees and shrubs in their dormant stages just before they blossom green buds and brightly colored flowers.

The transition from winter to spring is an exciting time to be in the Gardens. Even Google reviewers agree, “I love it in all seasons!” It’s impossible not to marvel at the beauty of nature and consider it a time of renewal and growth. A time to take a deep breath. It can inspire anyone through any season of life they may be experiencing right now. And no two days ever look the same at the Gardens. Thanks to the investment of so many in our community and beyond, we’re in turn inspired to keep changing and growing every single day for you. We’re constantly working toward those five stars!

My favorite Google review eloquently states, “I think that it’s a great privilege to have such a wonderful place like this in Wausau!!” It’s so true! And in turn, it’s our great privilege to care for these Gardens to share our destination for inspiration with this community and beyond. Let’s face it, some secrets were just meant to be shared. We hope your future visits to the Gardens inspire you to shout about us from the rooftops and leave you with that “Five Star” feeling!

See you at the gardens!

Volunteers of the Year Written by Jim Force

Nancy Cedar

The Monk Gardens are going to miss her.

The former board member and valuable volunteer is planning to leave Wausau soon to relocate closer to her family. But her contributions will endure.

She joined the Monk Botanical Gardens Board of Directors in 2018, connecting through her career with the Wausau School District and the Garden’s popular out-of-school learning program. She served as secretary and then president, and continues to serve.

“I enjoy my board service and find it very rewarding to be part of something fast-growing, that is a great community asset and will be for years to come,” she says. “Education is an important part of the mission of Monk Gardens, and that means a lot to me.”

She says her service on the board has helped her transition to retirement, providing structure and



purpose.

“It is hard to leave this wonderful community of Wausau,” she says. “But this process of letting go of material things brings clarity to what is important in

Jane and Mike Blick

If you’ve been out to Monk Botanical Gardens, you’ve probably run into the Blicks.

Jane and Mike have been volunteering since the Gardens got going more than 15 years ago. From planting to weeding to helping with events, there isn’t much they haven’t done to help the Gardens grow and succeed.

Recently, they helped make the Blossom of Lights a hit with the community -- rigging wires and cords, helping with parking, and acting as wayfinders along the trails.

“It’s fun seeing other people coming out to the Gardens and enjoying themselves,” says Mike.

Jane, formerly a member of the Master Gardeners, notes the progress the Gardens has made. “When we got started there wasn’t much going on,” she remembers. “We would plant flowers donated by greenhouses, and bring our own plants from home.”



It’s much different now, thanks in no small part to volunteers like Jane and Mike.

Mike notes that events bring in local people, but also those from out of town. “It gives you a good feeling to see folks from all over enjoying the Gardens.”

Volunteering at the Gardens has provided the Blicks

Spring & Summer Events

Visit monkgardens.org for all program descriptions and registration.

Hands-on Plants Workshops

Spring Session: March 28, April 4, May 9, and May 23

Teen Prom Session: Corsages & Bouttenieres, April 20 and 27th, 5:30-7

Hands-on Plants Kids

Running consecutively with most Hands-on Plants workshops!

Spring Equinox STEM Challenge: Orienteering

March 20

Spring Break in the Gardens

March 20-24

Earth Day Volunteering

April 21

Tots in the Gardens

Summer: Tuesdays at 10am May-August

Monk Around the Kitchen Garden

May 18, June 15, July 12, July 26, Aug 2 & 16, Sept 7

Garden Tours

Tuesdays at 6pm and Saturdays at 10am June-August

Yoga in the Gardens

Weekly June-August

Yoga in the Gardens

June 17

Summer Solstice STEM Challenge: Solar Cars

June 20

Booze & Botany

July 20 at Whitewater Music Hall

Shakespeare in the Gardens

August 10-12

Members Only Pizza Night

August 24

Dinner in the Gardens

August 25 & September 8, 6-8pm

Summer Camp in the Gardens

Yuckapalooza: Do you love all things that make others go 'YUCK!'? If you said yes, you're the perfect yuckapaloozist!

Plantapalooza: Dive into all that plants can do, and all the ways we use them. They aren't just pretty, we literally can't live without them!

Aquapalooza: Do you love life at the pond's edge?! Come spend the week catching frogs, collecting water samples, and learning about all the creatures that call the pond home.

One week of each camp theme for each age group!

Ages 5-6, June 5-29, Mon-Fri 8am-12pm

Ages 7-8, June 26-30 & July 10-21, Mon-Fri 8am-12pm

Ages 9-12, July 24-Aug 11, Mon-Fri 8-3pm (full day camp)

Pick & choose days for all ages July 5-7 available!

Sprouts Summer Session

3-4 Year Olds, Mon-Fri, 8:30-11:30am

Before care (8-8:30am) and after care (11:30-12) available!

June 5-9

Trees

June 12-16

Birds

June 19-23

Flowers

June 26-30

Weather

July 5-7

Camping (pick & choose days)

July 10-14

Bees & Butterflies

July 17-21

Bugs

July 24-28

Mammals

July 31-Aug 4

Water

Aug 7-11

Gardening

Spring Plant Sale

Member Ordering: May 2nd-4th • Community Ordering: May 5th-19th • Plant Pickup: May 31st, 5-7pm at the Gardens