



notes

FROM THE GARDENS



A publication of Monk Botanical Gardens
FALL/WINTER 2020

FEATURED ARTICLE

Spreading happiness, one plant at a time (pg 3)

Because of your support, Cindy and other senior residents and staff received some extra joy this summer.



Letter from the Board President

Dear Fellow Garden Steward,

Monk Botanical Gardens had a great year in 2019. Our membership levels increased, we had record attendance at our programming and events, and our financial resources continued to grow, thanks to members, donors, and popular programming. We entered 2020 with a strong board, committed volunteers, an ambitious and exciting schedule of events, and a new horticulturist on board.

Then coronavirus happened. All of a sudden, everybody's world changed. We closed the Gardens, and our schedule of events went by the wayside. We worried about sustaining our beautiful Gardens, we worried about sustaining our wonderful staff, and we worried for the very existence of our organization. We knew that the 2020 game plan had to change overnight.

And it did. Thanks to Darcie, Elise, Marissa, and our volunteers, we have shown what a viable and valuable organization Monk Botanical Gardens is to our community. Online, virtual activities went into full gear, with the aim of keeping Monk Gardens in the public eye. Then, when we determined it was safe to begin re-opening the Gardens themselves, we were able to hold a series of safe and popular events, most notably our Tuesday evening beer gardens and our annual Shakespeare in the Gardens programs.

And the community responded. We made appeals for help, and you continued to give consistently and generously. All of us at Monk Gardens are beyond grateful for all of your contributions to help us through these extraordinary times.

Nobody would wish the pandemic upon us, or upon the world. But, it has reaffirmed for us that we have a unique organization that people value and love, and that we are strong in so many ways. That is why I continue to volunteer and donate to Monk Gardens. I can't wait to see what we can accomplish next. Thank you, and stay tuned for news about our upcoming capital campaign for our new Visitor Center Complex – a dream ever since Monk Gardens was established!

See you in the Gardens.

Sincerely,

Bob Reinertson

Board President, donor, and garden steward



Rob Reinertson, Board President

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Elise Schuler, Education & Events Coordinator

Marissa Ashbeck, Horticulture & Grounds Manager

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Spreading happiness, one plant at a time

Because of your support, Cindy and other senior residents and staff received some extra joy this summer.

The Monk Botanical Gardens partnered with Our House Senior Living and Benedictine Living Community Centers to provide a little joy to their staff and residents this summer. With the aim of offering a plant to each resident and staff member, Gardens' staff and volunteers planted the pots and delivered them to both centers on July 9.

For residents who wanted to do the potting themselves and learn about the process, the Gardens provided the materials and an instructional video.

"Studies have shown that plants, and taking care of a plant, reduces depression and anxiety and helps create a healthy environment. While this is a small gesture of love, we hope it brought some joy during this challenging time. We wanted the residents and staff to know that they are appreciated and in our thoughts during this very isolating time," explains Darcie Howard, Executive Director of Monk Botanical Gardens.

Cindy Pawlikowski, a resident at Our House Senior Living, said when asked what it means to receive a plant, "It made me feel special." Cindy enjoyed potting her plant, which now sits in her room for her to enjoy.

This fall three, 8-foot accessible raised garden beds and accessible garden tools will be provided to Our House residents to grow food, herbs, and flowers. "I am looking forward to the raised beds so I will be able to reach the plants without having to lean over to smell the flowers," Cindy said with a smile. Once visitors are allowed, Gardens' staff will conduct bi-monthly programs with the residents using the raised beds as teaching tools. In addition to the plant delivery, the Gardens' staff cleaned up and will continue to maintain Benedictine Living Community's courtyard.

Mental health is a genuine concern during the pandemic. Research has found that gardening has a wide range of

health outcomes, including reductions in depression, anxiety, and body mass index, as well as increases in life satisfaction, quality of life, and community sense. Further research on gardening found it improved life satisfaction and mood.

"We are so pleased to receive support from the B.A. & Esther Greenheck Foundation to make this program happen," says Darcie Howard, "they understand the need to support the improvement of mental health in our community through innovative ways."



Cindy Pawlikowski
Our House Senior Living resident

Welcome our newest staff member, Marissa Ashbeck!



Marissa Ashbeck loves the Monk Botanical Gardens, calling them a “little piece of serenity.”

But she hopes they will be even better in the next two to three years, due in part to her leadership and hard work as the Gardens’ new Horticulturist.

“I have more of a modern approach to gardening,” she says. “I strive to demonstrate environmen-

tal stewardship by creating beautiful landscapes using plants that have long-lasting color, great growth habits, easy maintenance, and are great for pollinators.”

She’s already implementing her ideas, creating new gardens in the entry area, and planning to improve the Wildflower Woods, Meditation Garden, and is helping to implement the new Master Gardeners’ Shade and Hosta Garden. In the future, she plans to help develop Sara’s Storybook Garden and the area between the Treehouse and the Potager.

Her familiarity with the surrounding area will help as she continues to develop the landscapes that are a fit for our region. She is a graduate of Mosinee High School, and the University of Wisconsin- River Falls, where she earned a degree in Horticulture- Landscape Design and Management in 2017.

She started with the Gardens in March, and despite restrictions caused by the Covid-19 Pandemic, she’s already developed a strong and productive relationship with the volunteers at the Gardens.

“They’re simply great,” she says. “They want to get their hands dirty, be part of the development, and want to better the Gardens.” “The gears are turning,” she says, and the volunteers are helping to generate new ideas and progress.

The connection between people and nature is her sweet spot. “I love to educate people,” she says, adding that working in a community garden was a perfect way to pursue that goal.

In addition to her onsite hours at the Gardens, Marissa also offers a landscape consulting service. She is excited to help people develop practices that will enhance their own private landscapes.

Board Spotlight

Nancy Cedar

Education brought Nancy Cedar and the Monk Botanical Gardens together.

Currently secretary of the Gardens’ board of directors, Nancy is also the out-of-school coordinator for the Wausau School District. In that position, she began to work with the Gardens a few years ago, helping young students visit the gardens and learn about the environment.



She greatly enjoys both connections with the Gardens. While note-taking can be laborious, the secretarial task energizes Cedar.

“I’m simply amazed at the dynamic direction the Gardens are going in, and our plans for the future,” she says.

“It’s exciting to see the plans for the Visitors Center, the pre-school, the rental yurts, and the beer garden. It’s such a great vision.”

She credits staff with helping the gardens survive the Covid 19 pandemic. “They’ve exhibited such out of the box thinking--helping people experience the Gardens without being able to go there (The Gardens re-opened to the public, seven days a week on August 12 through September 30).

While she deals with all aspects of the gardens as a board member and officer, Nancy remains most enthusiastic about our educational mission.

“The Gardens are a great community resource,” she says. With Gardens executive director Darcie Howard and education coordinator Elise Schuler, Nancy has helped develop a range of after school and summer field trips and other learning programs for students.

“It’s great building minds,” she says.

Volunteer Spotlight

Bonnie Anderson



It's no surprise that Bonnie Anderson is a devoted volunteer at the Monk Botanical Gardens.

She knew the Gardens' donor, Bob Monk, and at his invitation would tour the property with him on his golf cart. Later she helped him plant small areas with plants and flowers.

She lived in the townhouses near the Gardens back then, but after she

moved to a different address, she has remained in touch and continues to contribute.

"I love to garden," Bonnie says. "The Gardens were a good fit for me."

Among her first volunteer activities was the after school program at Riverview Elementary. "We worked one day a week with third-graders," she recalls. "That was really fun." Before the Covid 19 pandemic cancellations this spring, the program involved a number of schools.

One of the projects was a sunflower-morning glory tunnel, with students starting the seeds in April, and Bonnie creating a physical structure at the Gardens for the flowers to grow on. "That was more fun than I ever thought," she says.

Her generosity goes beyond the school projects. Last year, she volunteered to help with the Shakespeare in the Gardens program. In August, she and her husband John Enk were involved with the Alice in Wonderland adventure, dressed up as Humpty Dumpties.

While the virus has limited activity this year, Bonnie sees the Gardens playing an important role in the life of the community. "Volunteering is a very rewarding way to share your abilities," she says. "You can be self-quarantined, and still be outside having fun."

Thank you
to our
agents of change!

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agent of change

Connecting with you during the pandemic

COVID-19 and the changes it brought to everyday life created significant challenges for the Gardens' spring and summer programming. Initially, we had a summer schedule full of summer camp, Tots in the Gardens, Hands-on Plants Workshops, art programs, and more.

But we did our best to still make programs accessible and fun for all.

We moved all of our programs online through Facebook Live and YouTube. Tots in the Gardens occurred online, where we were still able to do stories and easy-to-do at home crafts, and Summer Camp happened online to help inspire kids to get outside and explore in the same ways we would during summer camp.

Wanting to stay connected and provide support as we all were spending more time in our yards and gardens, Gardens Chats helped to provide excellent information and answer questions through Facebook Live. Our newest staff member Marissa Ashbeck spends each Tuesday providing a new gardening or horticulture topic to anyone watching. Check her out this fall for tips and tricks to make your garden better.

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In June, we changed our Hands-on Plants Workshops to offer both in-person and online options. Participants were able to elect to do the program in person, socially distanced and with masks, or do the projects at home following a step-by-step video made by our education staff.

The Gardens is committed to providing a safe site and programs for people to enjoy during the pandemic. We know there is no safer or better place to renew and relax than in nature. And what could make that even better? Beer, of course! Open Nights in the Gardens was born from a partnership with Whitewater Music Hall, who provided the beer garden and the live music each Tuesday evening. Participants come and enjoy a beer, eat some food from a local food truck and just sit, socially distanced, and enjoy each other's company.

The Gardens' staff appreciate the challenge that was handed to us this past spring. We had to "up our game" in the video and social media platforms. Of course, we slammed into many "technical difficulties," but were able to stay connected to the community and bring a little of the Gardens to all of you! We'll continue using Facebook Live and YouTube to educate when being at the Gardens is not an option. However, to truly connect with plants, we hope to do most of our programming in the Gardens in the future.



Garden Tips for Fall cleanup

Now that the leaves are starting to fall and the frost is covering the plants, it is time to start thinking about cleaning up your gardens for the winter. Fall is a great time to cut down herbaceous perennials in the garden, especially if there was any sign of pests or disease on the plant tissues. Fungal spores and insect eggs can overwinter on plant material and in the soil during the cold winter months. It is best to dispose of the infected materials by burning or by taking them away from your yard. You can also leave perennial plants standing if they provide interest in the winter landscape. Ornamental grasses, coneflower, black-eyed susan, and sedum are great perennials to leave standing for appeal, and they provide food and habitat for birds and wildlife. All of these plants flower in fall, so they are great for pollinators as well.

After you have cleaned out your garden beds for fall, you may want to consider putting down a fresh layer of mulch to prepare for the flush of growth in spring. If you had any issues in your gardens or your lawn with annual weeds, fall is a great time to spread pre-emergent herbicide granules to prevent weed seeds from germinating. Pre-emergent can be applied in fall and in spring to give you head start on keeping weeds down.

Fall is a great time to get the last of your plantings in the ground. You can successfully plant up until the ground starts to freeze. Even though plants may be going dormant, you can still get the roots to establish during cooler temperatures. So, if there is an area that needs some plant additions, don't be afraid to add perennials, shrubs or bulbs to your gardens this fall. If you are looking for spring color in your gardens, try planting bulbs this fall to create a colorful show in spring. Fall is a great time to get into the garden!

Marissa Ashbeck, Horticulture and Grounds Manager

Did you know that we have a YouTube channel?

You can find videos about useful nature apps, member highlights videos, and videos from events!

Scan the QR code to get to our YouTube page.

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COVID-19 hasn't slowed down our Garden additions

We haven't heard many footsteps around the gardens, but we have heard the sound of machinery and progress. We have taken advantage of these unusual circumstances over the past few months. Now that the gardens are open again, keep an eye out for the updates made to the grounds over the past four months.

The North Central Wisconsin Master Gardeners' Hosta Shade Garden has been taking shape. Berms, boulders, pathways, and plants have been installed. You must come and check out the view from the treehouse!

An essential part of our mission is to maintain an accessible garden for all to use and enjoy. The trails at the Gardens have not been resurfaced in 12 years! It is now time to repair them this September. We are thankful for receiving a grant from the Dwight & Linda Davis Foundation and Wisconsin Public Service Foundation, which will cover the cost of resurfacing over a mile of trails and the parking lot. You will soon hear the hum of large equipment as the trails are regraded, widened, and new gravel is compacted.

Beautifying the entryway to the Gardens has been a priority of ours this year. A variety of annual, perennial, and shrub plantings were installed along the main pathways to generate interest and create areas for expansion. Keep an eye out for new plantings each year to continue to create a welcoming and beautiful space.

As you meander through the landscapes, you may notice new signage in among the plants. We have been working hard to get woody and herbaceous plants labeled and entered into our plant database. Each plant will have a label at the base of the plant and an accession tag attached to it. Soon you will be able to access our database of plants online.

With the additions of all of these projects, the gardens continue to improve. Without the hard work of staff, interns, volunteers, and generous donors, we would not have been able to continue developing our new garden spaces, so THANK YOU!



Despite the pandemic, Monk Botanical Gardens has had an active season!



Alice in the Gardens — Out of the Woods Theatre performed scenes of Alice in Wonderland, led by Alice throughout the Gardens, ending with a Mad Hatter Tea Party. A unique experience for all ages!



Shakespeare in the Gardens — Three showings of Midsummer Night's Dream for children and three evening showings of Much Ado About Nothing, performed by Out of the Woods Theatre, were sold out for this year's Shakespeare in the Gardens.



Dinner in the Gardens — Polito's General Manager, Dan Sosnowski, demonstrated how to stretch pizza dough. Guests were able to stretch their dough, add sauce and cheese and collect toppings from the Gardens' veggie gardens to top their pizza.



Build a Bouquet Workshop — Horticulturist Marissa Ashbeck led guests through the Gardens to cut greenery and blooms to create unique bouquets.



Green Saturday — We transitioned this event to an online platform. Orders were taken ahead of time, and plants were delivered straight to customers' cars!



Open Nights in the Gardens — While we were only open for events, Open Nights in the Gardens was the highlight of the week! Tuesdays were full of local food trucks, Whitewater Music Hall beer, and great local musicians!

A Look Ahead

Creating the next generation of nature lovers: Nature-based preschool programs

It's a brisk, foggy morning as I grab my jacket and run out the door to "help" my father cut wood. I am five years old and am heading straight for the ankle-deep stream that flows through the eight acres of forest behind our home. I sit at my favorite spot next to the stream and feel the soft moss between my fingers, imagining myself a deer, curled up and sleeping soundly until dawn breaks. After the sun warms my face, I decide it is time to cross the stream. I have spent days trying to balance myself on the log that spans the stream, but so far can only accomplish it with the aid of a large walking stick. Today, I am determined to do it on my own. For the next 20 minutes, I try, falling into the shallow water and soaking my boots each time. As I stand in the water, frustrated, I notice two water beetles in front of me and squat down to watch them swim in circles around each other, making patterns in the water that I trace with my finger in the air. As I am about to catch them I hear my father call me. I jump up, yelling, "coming!" and head toward his voice, knowing I will be back soon to conquer the log crossing.

How many of you spent the majority of your childhood exploring the outdoors as I did? My outdoor experience growing up was a key factor in my cognitive, physical, social, and emotional development. In the example above, I tested my balance, coordination, and endurance. I learned about disappointment and how to manage frustration with my failings. My experience helped me develop my imagination and observation skills, and manage risk. Finally, because I spent my childhood outside, I found a connection to nature that in turn developed my understanding of conservation. (A Cornell University study demonstrated that children under the age of 11 who have positive experiences in wild nature, tend to develop a strong conservation ethic as adults. Playing outdoors helps create the next generation of conservation leaders.

Every day, the Monk Botanical Gardens' school and public programs provide outdoor experiences for children. Last fall the Gardens partnered with Marathon County Head Start to provide six half-day field trips to two of their classrooms. This fall the program will continue, serving nine classrooms of 3-5 year-olds, providing over 18 hours of environmental education to 90 students.



This successful partnership has also led the Gardens to begin the development of Marathon County's first "Sprouts" Nature Preschool, scheduled to open in the fall of 2021. The preschool is founded on the idea that children learn best through play and hands-on experiences. Students will spend at least 80 percent of their time outdoors, guided in exploration and learning by our skilled team of teacher-naturalists.

Academic skills such as pattern recognition, letters, numbers, and colors emerge from a child's experience—counting birds on the pond, looking for matching colors of flowers and bugs, tracking animal prints in the snow, journaling about nature observations, and more. Combining early childhood education and conservation education is an effective method to prepare children for school and life. Close and constant contact with nature contributes to young children's motor, sensory, social, emotional, moral, and cognitive development, adding to the child's physical and mental well-being. The season and the interests of the children will drive the curriculum. By the end of the school year, students will have an intimate connection to nature.

We may never return to a time when children roam freely, exploring the natural world on their own, but we can provide similar experiences to our children within today's social parameters. The Head Start in the Gardens program and Sprouts Nature Preschool will accomplish just that while nurturing our future conservation leaders.

If you are interested in learning more about the Nature preschool please contact , Elise Schuler at eschuler@monkgardens.org.

Darcie Howard, Executive Director

Fall/Winter Programs

Tots in the Gardens

Tuesdays

2-3pm on odd weeks of the month

10-11am on even weeks of the month

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, snack, and story.

After School in the Gardens

September 8-November 24

Monday-Thursdays, 3:30-5:30pm

After a day of in-school or virtual learning, let your kids play in the Gardens, explore and learn about nature with Monk 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 our experienced environmental educator. This program is made possible by support from the Community foundation of North Central WI Covid-19 Relief fund.

Garden Chats

2nd & 4th Tuesdays at 12pm | Marissa Ashbeck, Horticulture & Grounds Manager, will provide you with great information and guidance, while you engage her in questions of your own.

Chats will be hosted online via Facebook Live. Visit our facebook page for details.

Dirt to Pot Cooking Series

August 31, Sept 14, & 21 | This 3-week cooking series, highlights the best of local chefs and connects their cooking classes with our kitchen garden. Participants will learn how to grow, maintain, harvest, prepare and cook a variety of garden-fresh meals.

Creatures of the Night

September 25th, 7-9pm | Let's see how nocturnal you are! Join us for a family nighttime adventure. Explore the lives of nocturnal animals through an interactive walk in the dark through the Gardens, a truly unique experience, filled with stories, games and experiments.

Apple Pressing & Cider Making Workshop

September 28th, 6-7:30pm | In this hands-on workshop, we'll use a couple of home cider presses to turn apples into cider – from selection and preparation of fruit to pressing to storage and possible fermentation.

Luminary Garden Walks

October 2nd, 7-9pm

November 6th, 5:30-8pm

December 4th, 5:30-8pm

What if there's snow? Bring snowshoes! Snowshoes welcome, and a limited number available for rent (\$2 per pair). Trails will be cleared for easy walking without snowshoes.

Hands-on Plants: Adult Workshops

Grapevine Wreaths

Sept 22nd 6-7:30pm | Gather grapevines in the Gardens and make a seasonal wreath to take home for your front door.

Fall Root Preparation

Oct 6th 6-7:30pm | You will learn about the Horseradish plant and the cultural practices that go along with growing this perennial in your garden, and you'll prepare a jar to take home.

Holiday Porch Pots

Nov 17th 6-7:30pm | Decorate your containers with natural elements collected from the Gardens for the holiday season before the snow starts to fly!

Balsam Wreath Making

Nov 24th 6-7:30pm | We will be assembling the wreaths with balsam tips, along with other natural elements to create a gorgeous wreath that you can be proud of.

Kissing Ball Making

Dec 1st 6-7:30pm | You will learn how to make a decorated kissing ball using evergreen tips and various other stems. Take home this beautiful feature to decorate your entryway for the holiday season.

Holiday Centerpieces

Dec 8th 6-7:30pm | Come and learn how to create and care for a beautiful holiday centerpiece using evergreens, dogwoods, dried flowers and berries.

It's time to make the dream a reality!

Substantial progress has been made to complete the objectives of the Monk Master Plan 2020.

Now, the Board of Directors believes it is time to look ahead and start planning for the next 10 to 20 years. As part of that vision, we are exploring the possibilities for creating a new Visitor Center Complex. This is an exciting idea, but still very much in the formative stages. However, the Board has approved conducting a planning and feasibility study. This study will help us determine the efficacy of our preliminary plans and how they might be funded. We will share information as our planning process continues.

Thank you to our Corporate Stewards and Sponsors for 2020!

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MONK BOTANICAL GARDENS OFFERS ACTIVITIES YEAR ROUND.

As Fall colors prompt a new season of activity, Monk Botanical Gardens is ready with a line up of events for the months to come. We invite you to take a look inside at the Fall/Winter lineup!

Looking to make improvements in your yard or garden? If you need advice and guidance, we offer landscape consulting services year-round.

For more information, call 715-261-6309 or email Marissa at mashbeck@monkgardens.org

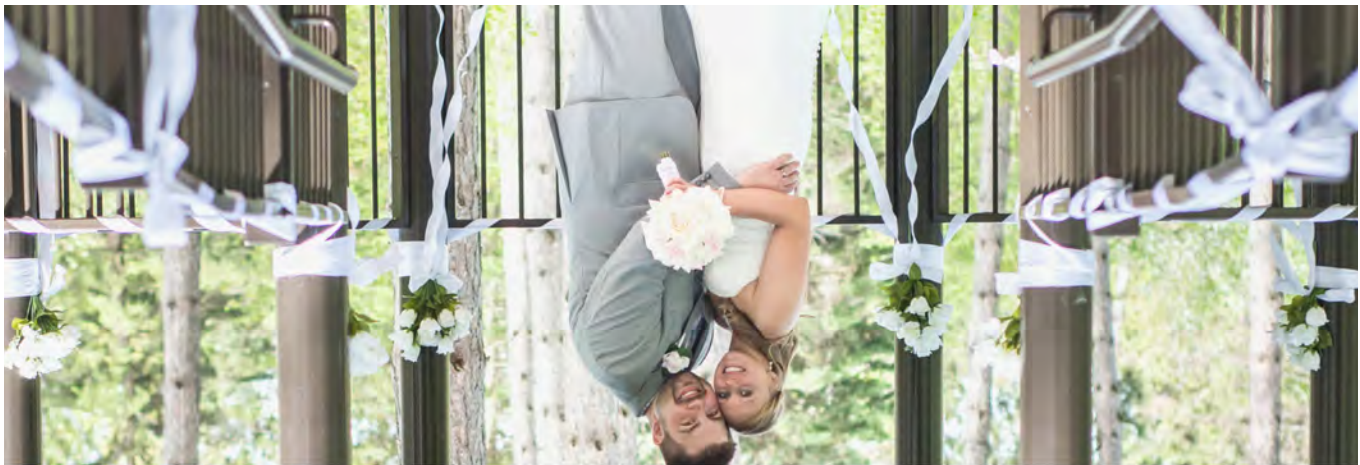


Photo by Alison Kundratic

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