

A publication of Monk Botanical Gardens

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The Value of Volunteers (pg 4)

Thank you to our hardworking volunteers for their countless

hours of service

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Monk Botanical Gardens

Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Fellow Garden Enthusiasts:

Three and a half years ago, I was hired as the Gardens' first fulltime employee and Executive Director. The passion of the Gardens' volunteers was one of the primary reasons I decided to lead this organization. Their excitement for this well-planned garden was contagious. I knew that with the development of a strong team of qualified professionals and our volunteers' passion and skills, the master plan would come to fruition.

Last season volunteers came out to work in the Gardens, masks on, in the heat to ensure that the Gardens' momentum of growth did not slow even in this pandemic. They continued to nurture a beautiful kitchen garden, helped with programs and events that we were fortunate enough to host safely, and helped to expand for new gardens. You will read the stories behind these accomplishments in the pages to come.

Our committee and board volunteers excelled in the year we needed them most. Through their creativity, hard work, and dedication, the Gardens successfully moved through the pandemic, working with new partners, donors, and staff, building an even more resilient organization.

Thank you, volunteers!

Volunteers and staff are ready to emerge into Spring with a vibrant excitement for the renewal of some favorite programs, reconnecting and celebrating with our volunteers, and developing more gardens, programs, and our organizational foundations. The pages ahead will provide you with an impressive list of programs and events and inform you of upcoming additions in the Gardens-all getting you (and us) excited about the new season!

So, I invite you to join us in a season of renewal and growth and, of course, lots of gardening!

See you in the Gardens,

Darcie Howard

Executive Director



Darcie Howard, Executive Director

GARDENS STAFF

Darcie Howard - Executive Director Elise Schuler - Education & Events Manager Marissa Ashbeck - Horticulture & Grounds Manager Tiffany Rodriguez-Lee - Development Director Kaytie Roettinger - Environmental Educator

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Moving Beyond the Dream to Create a Vision and Plan

The Gardens' steady growth and success in engaging the community encouraged us to undertake a capital campaign feasibility study in the fall of 2020. This study tested support for: constructing a Visitors Center, completing current gardens, installing additional themed gardens, creating an endowment, and adding other enhancements to the organization.

The results provided us with vital feedback on whether and how to proceed. Study participants were a diverse group of 37 individuals, including major donors and community leaders. They communicated a great deal of respect for the Gardens, its board, professional leadership, and staff. They also see a trusted, maturing organization that has seen great success in recent years to improve infrastructure, build effective programs, and become a valued community asset.

The study recommended the Gardens pursue a \$4 million campaign and focus on these steps to gear up for and carry out the campaign:

- Define the project in greater depth to articulate the community benefits and transformational impact on the Gardens. Further, the project should develop prioritized components that can be phased in over time as funding allows.
- Continue strengthening the organizational capacity to raise funds, steward donors, and manage operations.
- Cultivate deeper relationships with stakeholders (top donors, volunteers, foundations) by seeking further input and the opportunity to help refine critical components of the capital campaign.
- Create a community awareness initiative to increase visibility, understanding, and appreciation for what the Gardens does and how it benefits the Wausau region.
- Engage a broader group of volunteers to help execute the capital campaign.

The Gardens values the candid feedback provided by the study participants and embraces the need for continued growth. Indeed, the Gardens is already in the process of transforming itself to the next level of organizational effectiveness.

We will be seeking capital campaign volunteers, additional board members, and growing our organizational committees to provide a strong foundation for the Gardens.

If you are interested in being part of this transformative time or have questions, please contact Darcie Howard, Executive Director at dhoward@monkgardens.org.

Volunteer Spotlight Jane & Mike Blick

The Value of Volunteers

Over the many years they've been volunteers for the Monk Botanical Gardens, Jane & Mike Blick have thousands of hours of their time to help with gardening projects and events.

Jane first became aware of the Gardens many years ago through her involvement with Master Gardeners. Before the Gardens had staff and everything was run by volunteers, Jane was part of a group of volunteers who would install plants that Bev Smith obtained from a local nursery each year.

"And I became involved with the Gardens because I'm involved with Jane," Mike joked.

Together, Mike and Jane have helped with several Gardens projects, like spreading wood chips throughout the Shade & Hosta Garden. In 2018, they were part of the team of volunteers that worked more than 2,000 hours to clear over 10,600 square feet of buckthorn, grape vines, and other invasive species to make room for the Shade & Hosta Garden. Also, Jane's yoga group has a Kitchen Garden plot that she spends some time tending each year.

Last Fall, Monk Botanical Gardens partnered with Our House Senior Living to install three, 8-foot accessible Gardens beds to allow the residents the opportunity to grow food, herbs, and flowers. Mike and Jane were part of the team that helped dig up sod, lay pavers, and build the garden beds.

In addition to working on the Gardens grounds, Mike and Jane have each volunteered to help with Gardens events like Booze & Botany and Luminary Walks. They also participated on the Trivia Night Committee, and Mike helped write some of the questions and served as a judge.

When they're not working in the Gardens, Mike and Jane enjoy walking through the Gardens and enjoying the new landscapes and scenery. "I love to watch it evolve over the years, and it's come a long way from just a few years ago when there was no staff," said Mike. The Gardens staff and Board would like to thank the Blicks for their hard work to make the Gardens a beautiful community resource!



Monk Botanical Gardens Values Our Volunteers!



Volunteering has always been integral to the success of the Monk Botanical Gardens. After all, as little as a few years ago the Gardens had no staff. Every single task required to grow the Gardens into Central Wisconsin's first and finest botanical gardens was done by a volunteer.

Although the Gardens has added five staff members since those days, our volunteers are essential to everything we do. Together with our donors, the Gardens' volunteers are the reason we are able to produce hundreds of hours of educational programming and community events each year and provide a beautiful haven in our community.

The Gardens' staff and Board would like to thank our hardworking volunteers for their countless hours Kaytie lives south of Wausau with her family. She enjoys of weeding, clearing brush, trimming trees, planting hiking, camping, reading, and (most of all) exploring! gardens, helping at events, and much, much more!

Learn more about how you can join our volunteer efforts by visiting www.monkgardens.org/volunteer

Welcome Our Newest Staff Member!





Kaytie Roettinger **Environmental Educator**

Kaytie started her journey with Monk Botanical Gardens as an Environmental Education Intern in the summer of 2019. After a summer of sunshine, smiles, and lots of learning, she truly fell in love with environmental education.

Later that year, she graduated with a degree in Biology from the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh. After her internship, she stayed in touch with the mentors she had gained at the Gardens as she pursued a graduate degree in Conservation Biology from the University of Wisconsin- Stout. As we were planning our new Sprouts Garden Preschool for this Fall, Kaytie was a perfect choice for our new Environmental Educator/Assistant Teacher position.

Kaytie is looking forward to sharing her knowledge and passion for nature with the kids who participate in the Gardens' educational events, and she's excited to welcome students to the Sprouts Garden Preschool soon. Growing up in rural Crivitz, Kaytie spent her days playing outside and exploring, gaining a life-long passion for the outdoors. She hopes to provide that experience for others and foster a lasting relationship between people and nature. She is grateful for the opportunity to be part of such a talented and creative team, and she can't wait to see what lies ahead in the next few years for the Gardens.



Grounds Update

Your Gifts in Action: Exciting New Projects at the Gardens

Because of your support, there are some fantastic garden improvements planned for this growing season!

Monk Botanical Gardens is now an All-American Selections Display Garden. Horticulture team members and volunteers will be installing a display bed by the front entrance to encompass this year's All American Selection (AAS) Landscape Design Challenge theme of "Diversity in the Garden." The display will showcase past and present AAS winners while encouraging the community to create diversity in their gardens.

Every year, the National Garden Bureau (NGB) selects plants for their "Year of" program. The NGB selects an annual, a perennial, a bulb crop, an edible, and a shrub as the crops of the year. Plants are chosen for their popularity, ease of growth, adaptability, genetic diversity, and versatility. This year, 2021, is the "Year Of" the Sunflower, Hyacinth, Garden Bean, Hardy Hibiscus, and Monarda. Look for these plants with their fun facts throughout the Gardens. Which ones will you grow in your garden this year?

In partnership with the Gardens, the North Central Wisconsin Master Gardeners will complete the Shade & Hosta Garden this summer. Join us in celebrating our new garden addition at the upcoming grand opening (watch for dates and details on our website). This garden offers a perfect space to relax in the shade and admire the collection's unique Hosta varieties.

Clearing continued beyond the Shade & Hosta Garden this past fall. Our team members and volunteers' cleared the corridor between the Shade & Hosta Garden and Wildflower Woods, providing a perfect place to plant a new garden. Additionally, the Meditation Garden will be extended to create a relaxing pathway along the pond's west edge.

Sara's Storybook Garden volunteers are making great strides in clearing the area to create the children's garden. Phase one construction will start with the Hobbit House and the surrounding landscape.

Thank you to our generous donors who make these improvements possible. We look forward to seeing you in the Gardens this summer, discovering all the new gardens and features.

After School Program Nurtures CURIOSITY & DISCOVERY

The After School in the Gardens program offers children what they need most; screen-free time spent outdoors, engaging in active learning and exploration. For each session, our educators come prepared with planned activities that will spark wonder in participants. From there, we let the session progress naturally and encourage unstructured, child-initiated play and learning. The brilliant Albert Einstein once said, "Play is the highest form of research," and we agree! On a typical day, children might be catching frogs, doing science experiments, creating nature crafts, bird watching, building forts, gardening, or cooking with ingredi-

ents from the kitchen garden.

During a November 2020 after-school session on a rather chilly day, the children made a soup packed with veggies they had harvested earlier in the kitchen garden season. As the other children chopped and measured, it was clear that one of them, Evan, had lost interest. "My brother got the new Minecraft for his birthday yesterday. I can't wait to go home and play it! Can you call my mom and ask her to pick me up early?" he cried, his eyes wide and pleading. "I have that game, and it's so fun!" Morgan piped up. The kids began chattering about the video game's coolest features, the excitement for the soup fading fast.

Recognizing the need to introduce a different activity while waiting for their soup to cook, I introduced a new tool that was new to this group- handheld microscopes! Evan's face lit up when he saw them. "Cool!" he exclaimed. "I've never seen a microscope like this. These are something a REAL scientist would use!" Soon, he was investigating salt granules, grass blades, and sidewalk stains with keen interest. Morgan was just as fascinated. "Can you take a picture of this microscope and send it to my mom? I want to add it to my Christmas list!" Any lingering thoughts of video games had seemingly vanished.

The children were having so much fun that they were somewhat reluctant to get the microscopes cleaned up and put away as pick-up time approached. They sipped on the delicious soup and talked about how microscopes reminded them of binoculars in the way that they make things look bigger. They decided to spend the following day bird watching - also a first for Evan!

These discovery moments can make lasting impressions on a child and drive them to uncover the details of the world around them. Providing children with the opportunity to stay curious, build resilience and confidence, and find new interests in the outdoors is essential to instill lifelong learning habits. When I look back on this story, it reminds me of when I was gifted my first magnifying glass as a child. The world never looked quite the same to me after that day, and it woke a curiosity in me that I hadn't known existed. That curiosity continues to burn in me, even as an adult. Thanks to the Thomas Allen David Memorial Fund, this program will continue to be free to any child wanting to participate this year.

For more information about how to register for our free Afterschool in the Gardens program this spring, visit monkgardens.org/after-school.



News & Announcements

Ruder Ware Sponsors Head Start Field Trips

We want to give a **big thank you to Ruder Ware** for sponsoring field trips for students from Marathon County Head Start for the 2020-2021 school year!

Last fall, our educators Elise and Kaytie led eight classes of students through the Gardens. Each class visited three times for a total of 24 field trips, and those same classes will be returning this Spring for three more field trips each. Each class in the fall had 10 students, which means 80 children had the opportunity to explore the Gardens and learn the lessons nature provides. This Spring, the Head Start program has expanded their class sizes to 12, so 96 children will be welcomed to the Gardens.

"Just wanted to say thank you for such a great field trip on Wednesday. We couldn't have asked for a better day. Really appreciated the age appropriateness of the activities and how engaged the children were," wrote a Head Start teacher in a thank you note following the trip.

Monk Botanical Gardens is so thankful to Ruder Ware for providing this one-of-a-kind learning experience for the children.

Save the Date: Trivia Night is set for June 24

After a sold-out event in 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic forced us to cancel the 2020 Trivia Night. This year, we're excited to bring the event to the Gardens where we can host over 350 people for a fun night of prizes, food, and trivia. A table for six starts at \$350, so gather your friends and brush up on your trivia knowledge! More information will be posted on our website in the coming weeks.

Let's Spring Forward into New Workshops

Let's Spring forward into some fresh topics that will get you excited for the growing season. We will be hosting Green Saturday Workshops on June 5th, with workshop topics including Gardening in Small Spaces, Build Your Own Succulent Container, Composting and Growing Mushrooms. The day begins at 7am with a bird walk led by the Wausau Bird Club's Sara Sabatke. Let's get your hands on some plants, come and join us this Spring in the safety of our outdoor learning space.

Help us build a Yurt!

We are looking for a handful of experienced builders to help assemble our future Sprouts Garden Preschool's classroom—a yurt—and build the adjacent floor. We plan to do the work in May on weekends and in the evenings. Specific dates will be set closer to May (all depends on weather!). If you are interested please contact Darcie Howard at dhoward@monkgardns.org.

Greenheck Foundation's Support Provides Gardening Opportunities for Senior Living Residents

Last fall, Monk Botanical Gardens partnered with **Our House Senior Living** to provide three 8-foot accessible raised garden beds and accessible garden tools for residents to grow food, herbs, and flowers. This project was generously sponsored by the B.A. & Esther Greenheck Foundation and made possible through the work of volunteers who help assemble the beds.

Now that Spring is here, we'll soon be able to start visiting the residents at Our House Senior Living to get them working in their new accessible garden beds. Of the three garden beds, two will be planted with vegetables and herbs that can be used by the Our House kitchen when preparing meals for the residents, and the third garden bed will be planted with flowers. Our staff will meet with residents weekly to work in the garden beds from planting this spring through harvesting throughout the summer and fall.

Mark Your Calendar! Spring Plant Sale

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 or pick a succulent to brighten your patio or windowsill. **Plant pick-up will be May 26, 5-7pm**. Come into the Gardens to pick up your order with help from our staff, and grab a bite to eat on your way from Hanuman Express.

Plants provided by Avalon Farms in Marathon. More information about the plants and the sale will be posted to our website soon.

Coming This Fall! Sprouts Garden Preschool

Sprouts Garden Preschool is a garden/nature based preschool program hosting 3-5 year olds. Sprouts Garden Preschool will put nature and plants at the heart of the program. It will be based on high-quality early childhood education and environmental education practices, and it will help lay a foundation of environmental literacy. Studies have shown that children learn best through play and hands-on experiences. Students will spend at least 80% of their time outdoors, guided in exploration and learning by a skilled early childhood environmental educator.

If you'd like to learn more, please join us for one of our informational meetings on **March 30 at 6pm or April 1 at 6pm**. The meetings will be held virtually on Zoom, and we will share the preschool's mission, the parent handbook, and review how to enroll, tuition, schedules, and more. We'll be happy to answer any and all questions you may have at the end of the meeting.

Plan your next Happy Birthday at Monk Botanical Gardens

2-hour parties Choose from a variety of themes!

Forest Forts Tea in the Treehouse Tie Dye Party Garden Trackers Bug Olympics Treehouse Heroes For more information, visit www.monkgardens.org



Upcoming Events

Recurrent Events

Garden Luminary Walks: Apr 2nd, Oct 1st, Nov 5th, Dec 3rd

Bring your family and friends (dogs are also welcome) to the gardens for a luminary-lit walk through the Gardens ending at the Kitchen Garden, where you can enjoy a bonfire, hot chocolate, and roasted marshmallows (bring your own marshmallows and sticks!)

Tots in the Gardens: Every Tuesday, March-October

Tots in the Gardens is an hour of nature-filled fun for you and your 3-5-year-old tot! Each week is a different nature-related topic with a story & an activity. Meet at the Kitchen Potager, and dress for the weather because we will be outside the whole hour!

Tours: Saturdays, June through September

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. No tours during special events on June 19, July 24, and Aug 14. No tour Labor Day weekend, Sept 4.

Summer Camp in the Gardens: June-August

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. Activities are developmentally appropriate, educationally relevant and most importantly fun! At the Gardens campers will be able to learn about relevant environmental subjects through hands-on activities, work together with their peers, and spend time outdoors! All of our camps are half day, 8am-12pm, and run Monday through Friday (unless otherwise noted).

Yoga in the Gardens: Monday & Thurs Evenings, June-Aug

Bring your mat and relax with Yoga in the Gardens on Mondays with WAYA and Wednesdays with Jean Miller. Drop-in, no registration required.

Garden Chats with Marissa: Every other Wednesday

Marissa Ashbeck, Horticulture & Grounds Manager, will provide you with great information and guidance while you engage her with questions of your own. Presented via FaceBook Live.

Concerts in the Gardens: Tuesdays in June and July

This event is an extension of our successful Open Nights held in 2020. Every Tuesday, we will host a local food truck, serve Whitewater Music Hall beer from tap, and groove to a popular local band.

May

Spring Plant Sale! Ordering begins May 5, Pickup on May 26

Help us kick off the season with the best plant sale in Wausau and support the Gardens with your spring planting purchases! On May 26, pick up your plants with help from Monk Gardens staff, and grab a bite to eat from Hanuman Express!

May 8 - Mother's Day Crafting

Would mom like a handmade card and craft for Mother's Day? We can help! Visit the Gardens to make a card and a craft to show mom how much you appreciate her.

June

June 5 - Green Saturday Workshops

Green Saturday at Monk Gardens has a day of green thumb fun for you! Put together a succulent planter to brighten up your windowsill, get the details on home composting, small space gardening, and mushroom growing. An early morning bird walk will also be led by Wausau Bird Club.

June 11 - Overnight in the Gardens

Be the first families to camp out in the Gardens! Bring your tent and camping gear to set up camp in the event lawn, build campfires, and Gardens staff will lead your family through preparing a garden-fresh meal over the fire. After dinner take a night hike and make sweet s'mores before hitting the hay.

June 17, 18 & 19 - Theatre in the Gardens: Marian, Or the **True Tale of Robin Hood**

Bring your blankets or chairs and get comfortable for a lovely evening watching a theater performance of Marian, or The True Tale of Robin Hood by Wausau's Out of the Woods theater group. In this comedic new take on the classic tale, Robin Hood is and has always been Maid Marian in disguise. Robin/Marian leads a motley group of Merry Men (many of whom are not men) against the greedy Prince John. As the poor get poorer and the rich get richer, who will stand for the vulnerable if not Robin? Modern concerns and romantic entanglements clash on the battlefield and on the ramparts of Nottingham Castle. A play about selfishness and selflessness and love deferred and the fight. Always the fight. The fight must go on.

June 24 - Trivia Night & Fundraiser

An evening filled with prizes, competition, food, and drink all to support the Monk Botanical Gardens. All proceeds go to help the Gardens continue to grow and provide high-quality programs and events.

July

July 9 - Overnight in the Gardens

Bring your tent and camping gear to set up camp in the event lawn, build campfires, and Gardens staff will lead your family through preparing a garden-fresh meal over the fire. After dinner take a night hike and make sweet s'mores before hitting the hay

July 15 - Booze & Botany

Join Wausau's finest mixologists at Timekeeper's Distillery for a night of unique and cultured fun! All proceeds go to help the Gardens continue to grow and provide high-quality programs and events.

July 21, August 11 & 25 - Harvest Box Pickup

Have you been admiring the veggies growing in the Gardens? Support the Gardens by purchasing some of the Kitchen Gardens' excess produce! Each Harvest Box will have a selection of vegetables and produce from throughout the kitchen garden, including a list of what's included and some recipe suggestions. Visit monkgardens.org in June for more information and to sign up for a box.

July 23 – Down the Rabbit Hole

Reserve your seat for this VIP Alice in Wonderland tea party. Mingle with the Alice characters, enjoy tea party-themed mocktails, wine, and light refreshments. Come dressed as your favorite Alice character to be entered to win a prize!

July 24 - Alice in the Gardens Theatre Event

Participants will be led down the rabbit hole through an array of magical scenes, performed by Out of the Woods Theater throughout the garden, stopping on occasion to play a life sized game of chess, flamingo croquet, paint the roses or maybe take their chance with the Red Queen. This magical experience will end with a spectacular tea party hosted by the Mad Hatter.

August

Fall Plant Sale - Ordering begins August 11, Pickup August 26

Members-only ordering begins August 4, and open ordering begins August 11. Plant lists, prices and the order form will be posted on monkgardens.org. Ordering will close for all on Aug 23 (or when sold out). On August 26, pick up your plants between 5 & 7pm with help from Monk Gardens staff, and grab a bite to eat from Hanuman Express!

August 6 - Overnight in the Gardens

Bring your tent and camping gear to set up camp in the event lawn, build campfires, and Gardens staff will lead your family through preparing a garden-fresh meal over the fire. After dinner take a night hike and make sweet s'mores before hitting the hay.

August 12, 13 & 14 - Shakespeare in the Gardens & **Children's Shakespeare Festival**

Bring your blankets or chairs and get comfortable for a lovely evening watching a theater performance of Shakespeare's Twelfth Night performed by Wausau's Out of the Woods theater group. Twelfth Night is a fast-paced romantic comedy with several interwoven plots of romance, mistaken identities & practical jokes. Separated from her twin brother Sebastian in a shipwreck, Viola disguises herself as a man & becomes a servant to Duke Orsino. Viola quickly becomes everyone's favorite guy in more ways than one and an awkward love triangle follows. Eventually, Sebastian turns up and causes even more confusion, chaos, and laughs.

August 25 - Build a Bouquet Workshop

Enjoy light refreshments and a glass of wine as Monk Gardens' Horticulturist leads you through choosing a container, picking your flowers and greenery, and creating the perfect bouquet arrangement to brighten your home.

August 27, Sept 3, Sept 10 - Dinner in the Gardens

Bring your family to the Gardens for a unique outdoor dinner-making experience. Guided by a local chef, use garden-fresh ingredients to make dinner as a family.

September

September 9 & 16 – Pick-Your-Own Bouquet Workshops

The blooms and greenery are ready for you! Come to the kitchen pavilion to get a pair of pruners and find out what blooms you can cut.

September 14 - Hands-On Plants Workshop: Grapevine Wreaths

Relax in front of the fireplace in our pavilion with some light refreshments and a glass of wine while you get your hands on plants this season creating decorations for your home, inside and out!

September 24 - Creatures in the Gardens

Take a night hike through the Gardens and while walking in complete darkness (please don't wear light-up shoes, bring or wear anything that glows, or bring flashlights), you'll play games, do experiments, and we'll do our best to become like the nocturnal creatures who call the Gardens home. End the hike by dissecting an owl pellet and reconstructing the skeleton of an owl's meal!

September 28 – Cider Making Workshop

Fresh apple cider is a treasured fall treat and, with the right equipment and enough apples, it can be made at home. 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. Our presenter, Paul Whitaker, has been making fresh cider from his backyard apple crop for over a dozen years and has been making hard cider and cider vinegar from it for at least half that long.

For more details and to register, visit www.monkgardens.org





Mailing address: 518 S 7th Ave, Wausau, WI 54401 Gardens address: 1800 N 1st Ave, Wausau, WI 54401 PRSRT STANDARD U.S. POSTAGE PAID UMS

Curious about what's growing in the Gardens?

Check out our plant gallery online! www.monkgardens.org/plant-gallery

Looking to add some flair to your home landscaping?

Monk Botanical Gardens offers a variety of services for all of your landscape needs. All consultations are conducted by a professional horticulturist! Services include landscape design, weed, and pest control, pruning, planting, and plant care tutorials, gardening with natives, yard and turf maintenance, customized services, and flower, vegetable and fruit gardening.

Get more info at www.monkgardens.org/consulting

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