

IN BLOOM

A PUBLICATION FROM WATERFRONT BOTANICAL GARDENS

SPRING 2020



WATERFRONT
BOTANICAL
GARDENS



A LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT



Dear Friends,

It has been an unusual spring for us, in more ways than one. Our thoughts have been with our friends in the community who are suffering, both personally and professionally, from COVID-19 and its effects.

It seems like it's been years since we opened,

yet it's only been six months. Since the shutdown in mid-March, the gardens have continued to bloom, and the Horticulture staff is hard at work taking care of our bulbs, plants, shrubs, and trees, with proper social distance.

Like many companies, we were on track to have our busiest year yet. Then, the brakes were put on everything. We've learned a lot over these last months.

First, if you build it, they will come - until there's a global virus to stop everyone from visiting public spaces. Since opening, we've hosted over 70 events and welcomed over 10,000 visitors.

Appreciate what you have. We are thankful we were able to get Phase 1 off the ground. We are using this downtime to finish up some projects so that things are beautiful when our visitors return.

Gardens are a place of education, beauty, and social distance. When we do welcome the public again, people will be able to enjoy what we've planted and built with comfortable space between them and fellow visitors.

Nature never stops growing and changing. The changes we've seen in the gardens this year are stunning and fascinating at the same time. Something new is blooming every day. It's amazing to us, and hopefully to you, what can be built and what will grow on a former landfill site, with a little patience and creative problem solving.

Innovation is key. Like many others, we are now sharing the gardens and our educational resources online so that we can stay engaged with the community. Like you, we are learning every day - new ways of communication, collaboration, and education.

In the words of our Japanese garden designer, Shiro Nakane, "gardens are intended to provide harmony with nature surrounding us. Historically, gardens were built in a way that separates visitors from what is going on in the outside world." **We look forward to the day when our guests rejoin us in our peaceful setting, for classes, concerts, yoga, events, and exploration.** We're still here - bigger, better, and more beautiful than ever.

See you soon! Stay safe.
Kasey

Kasey Maier, President

OUR VISION

Planting seeds and growing minds
for more sustainable cities.

STAFF

Kasey Maier
President

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Director of
Horticulture &
Education

John King
Director of
Development

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Elizabeth Chandler
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Wanda Peck
Youth Education
Specialist

**Cayce Crowder
Abellard**
Special Events
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Manager

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Horticulturist

Amy DeFigueiredo
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Strategic Plan

2019 WBG STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

For the first time in over 7 years, the Waterfront Botanical Gardens Board of Directors went through a strategic planning process, led by consultant, Dave Neumann. The strategic framework developed represents the collective input of the Waterfront Botanical Gardens Board of Directors, as well as senior staff members. The strategic planning process formally began on June 29, 2019, when the Board and staff convened at the Graeser Family Education Center for an all-day retreat. The feedback generated at the retreat was distilled by the Strategic Plan (Board) Committee into a revised vision and mission, along with five strategic imperatives.

The strategic framework – including goals, tactics, timetables, budgets, responsible parties, and metrics for monitoring results – is not intended to be a detailed driver of organizational action. Rather, it is a broad planning framework that should be used to guide annual and quarterly organizational planning by WBG's senior staff and Board.

As an organic document, this strategic framework will be reviewed annually by the Board and senior staff to ensure its relevance (and potential adaptation) to changing circumstances and opportunities.

THE FIVE STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES:

- 1 Raise the funds to build, maintain, and market the Gardens**
- 2 Build organizational and human resources capacity**
- 3 Develop and nurture the plant collection and facilities**
- 4 Provide an exceptional customer experience**
- 5 Build awareness through marketing and communications**

THE REVISED VISION AND MISSION:

- Vision:**
Planting seeds and growing minds for more sustainable cities.
- Mission:**
To cultivate urban botanical gardens that educate, inspire, and enhance appreciation of the relationship between plant life and a healthy environment.

OUR VALUES:

- Have integrity**
- Be accountable**
- Be accessible**
- Be collaborative**
- Deliver quality & excellence**

COVER FLORA

Front: Yellow Hybrid Magnolia

Back: Tulipa "Spryng Break"

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Vice President, Estate Settlement Advisor Senior, PNC Bank

Volunteer Garden Guides

“ASK ME!” – GARDEN GUIDES, A *GROWING* GROUP

While 2020 has been off to...an interesting start to say the least, the first official spring at the Waterfront Botanical Gardens is now upon us.

The next time you come to take a peek at all the fresh blooms, you'll be greeted by some folks from one of our newer groups of volunteers – the WBG Garden Guides.

But who are these blue-shirted friendly faces?

Conceived in September of 2019 ahead of our grand opening, our Garden Guides are volunteers who have undergone many hours of instruction on all topics WBG - from site history, to the people of the project, to the current construction and future plans, to the

state of the soil and plants in the gardens. Outside of the core training, there are also supplemental classes on more specific topics of interest.

Armed with this knowledge, Garden Guides are on hand during our visiting hours to welcome guests and answer any questions that they may have about the project. If you're a volunteer who has ever worked at the WBG booth at a community fair or festival, it's like that...and more!

At this time, three classes of Garden Guides have graduated from the program: the inaugural (and largest) class in October of 2019, and two smaller ones in November 2019 and February 2020. The training is offered three to four times per year, depending on demand.

Allison Whitehouse Adult Engagement Manager



WELCOME NEW EMPLOYEES



**Cayee Crowder
Abellard**
Special Events Manager



Daniel Cash
Facilities Coordinator



Amy DeFigueiredo
Staff Accountant

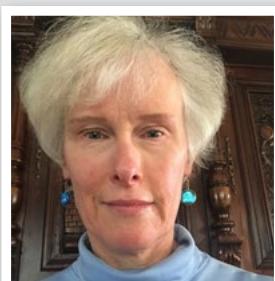


Chelsea Hicks
Horticulturist - Avish Estate



Wanda Peck
Youth Education Specialist

WELCOME NEW BOARD MEMBERS



Margaret Bell
Retired, Former Managing
Director, Fort Washington
Investment Advisors



Kathleen Watkins
Vice President, Estate
Settlement Advisor Senior,
PNC Bank



So how do you join their ranks and earn your own snazzy blue shirt, hat, and "ASK ME" button?

Keep an eye on the Volunteer page of the official WBG website. All new Garden Guide class dates will be posted there.

For Garden Guide class sign up, and to do any kind of volunteer work with WBG, please go to waterfrontgardens.volunteerhub.com and create your account. As you complete more orientations and trainings, more volunteer opportunities with us will appear for you.



We cannot continue our work without the support of our volunteers. We're looking forward to seeing you around again soon.

Thank you for your hard work!

Construction Update



2020 WILL BE A BUSY YEAR

Thanks to the generous gift made by Ellen Leslie in 2019, we are under construction for the remaining elements of Phase 1.

Since we opened to the public, there have been regular planning meetings between staff, the construction team, and the architect. The WBG departments of Horticulture, Facilities, and Events are updated weekly, with a consideration for upcoming events, keeping all departments up to date in terms of guest or event disruption, both for daily visitors and larger events.

We have developed a long-range calendar for Phase 1 construction so that everyone affected can plan ahead. It is important to manage visitor expectations, including those

planning future events, as well as school and tour groups.

Daily operations and the construction schedule have been affected by COVID-19. We are closed to the public until further notice. However, some construction has continued. At this time, we expect the Rounsvall Family Foundation Plaza Fountain and the Beargrass Creek Pathway to be completed this summer. The classroom complex is currently in the design phase, with construction scheduled to begin this summer and completed by early next year.



Kasey Maier
President



Keep an eye on our website and social media for more updates on construction: waterfrontgardens.org/about/construction-updates/

Japanese Garden and Bonsai

Building a Japanese Garden at WBG

BY KASEY MAIER

In spring 2019, three important things happened that shaped our decision about the construction schedule of the Japanese Garden. This garden has always been a feature of the Master Plan, but was originally scheduled as part of Phase 3.

First, we met architect, Nick Nakamura, who suggested we bring in the top Japanese garden designer in the world, Shiro Nakane, to see if he would be interested in designing such a garden for WBG. In September 2019, he visited us and toured our site. Mr. Nakane is now in the design process for our Japanese Garden.

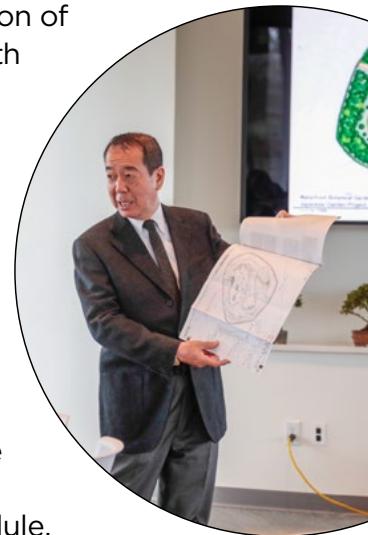
Second, bonsai gardener and enthusiast, Tommy McCurry, donated 20 prize bonsai trees to us that he has cared for most of his life. Tommy's love of bonsai started in the mid 1970's as a hobby, but blossomed when he joined the Louisville Bonsai Society as a member of their "Bonsai Club". It was as a member of this club that Tommy's knowledge and passion for bonsai trees formed the stepping-stone that

would lead to his future donation of them. Luckily, our affiliation with the Avish estate provides us cold frame storage for the bonsai trees during the winter months.

Third, in spring 2019, the family of Emil and Nancy Graeser contacted us and said that they would donate \$500,000 as a matching grant if we agreed to move the Japanese Garden earlier in the three-phase master plan schedule.

When these three things happened, we listened.

The son of renowned traditional Japanese landscape designer, Kinsaku Nakane, Shiro Nakane has been following in his father's footsteps since becoming the president of Nakane Garden Research and Landscape Consultant Firm in 1995. Having received



Shiro Nakane

Emil Graeser's dream and the commitment of the Graeser Family



Tommy McCurry

The late Emil Graeser ordered a bonsai tree from the back of a National Geographic magazine when he was a boy, which started his love of bonsai and Japanese gardens. In his lifetime, it is estimated that Emil visited over 10 Japanese gardens, including three trips to Japan to see the real thing. He cared for 25 bonsai trees until the end of his life, and passed his beloved collection along to other Bonsai experts, and his great grandson, Hawk. (pictured at right)

Emil believed in the influence a Japanese garden could have on Louisville and its youth as they grow and learn to appreciate the Japanese culture, as well as the beautifully-cultivated plants in such a garden.

Because of this love, Emil's children, Edie, David, Kurt, Jenny, and Kathleen, have committed \$500,000 toward a matching grant to get the Japanese Garden started at WBG.*



*Donations eligible for the **Japanese Garden Match Campaign** can be made on our website, waterfrontgardens.org/support/donate-online/ or by check to: Waterfront Botanical Gardens / PO Box 5056 / Louisville, KY 40255



his first lessons in the art of Japanese gardening as a young boy, he continues to apply traditional techniques and aesthetics with a modern perspective as a landscape designer.

Mr. Nakane has now visited Louisville twice to meet with staff, the construction team, and engineers on the development of the Japanese Garden for WBG. He is planning to visit at least two more times in 2020.

Even though we don't yet know the total cost to build the Japanese Garden, here's what we know so far.

Waterfront Botanical Gardens hosted the Board of Directors and guests of JASK (Japan/America Society of Kentucky) in early March to unveil the plan, and to meet Mr. Nakane and his son, Yukihiro. The members of JASK were excited that an authentic Japanese garden can soon be built in Kentucky.

While Mr. Nakane was here, he made a presentation to the team about his design for the Louisville garden. His emphasis for our Japanese garden is on children, stating that this would be a garden where children come to learn, and pass on their love of gardens to future generations. In addition, this Japanese garden gives local children the opportunity to develop an interest in Japan and its culture. Visitors will be intrigued by the colors in the garden, develop an appreciation of nature, and understand what they are protecting by having this beautiful garden.

The WBG Japanese Garden will utilize native plants so that visitors (children) will see what they can grow in their own gardens in Kentucky and southern Indiana. Plants and trees will be laid out so that their blooming seasons will intrigue and enlighten visitors. The garden will be a sacred place of peace and serenity.

Shiro Nakane's designs can be seen around the world, including:

**Jyuraku-en
Japanese Garden**
Toowoomba,
Queensland, AU

**Honolulu Memorial
Park Garden**
Honolulu, HI

**Carter Presidential
Center Japanese
Garden**
Atlanta, GA

**Korin-in Temple
Tea Garden**
Kyoto, Japan
...and many more.



For more info, visit:
lares.dti.ne.jp/~nakane/index.html

DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE NEW TAX LAW CHANGES?

Previously, deductible gifts to public charities were generally limited to 60% of a taxpayer's adjusted gross income (AGI); this year there's no cap and donors can deduct up to 100% of AGI for 2020. For corporations, the new law raises the annual limit from 10% to 25% of taxable income. Gifts must be made in cash to qualify for the 100% of AGI deductibility.

Also, the new law allows all taxpayers to take a charitable deduction of up to \$300, even if you do not itemize on your tax return. You might think that this is a small amount and would not make a difference. But what if all of our donors gave "just" \$300? Such support would have a huge impact on WBG and our students and visitors.

Because you can deduct this donation from your income, the actual donation will end up costing you less than the face value of the donation. Note, these gifts must be made in cash (cash, check, credit card).

For those who do itemize their deductions, the new law allows for cash contributions to qualified charities such as WBG to be deducted up to 100% of your adjusted gross income for the 2020 calendar year. And, don't forget to submit your donation to your employer if they participate in a company match program.

*Please consult your financial advisor for more information.



To make a donation, please use the enclosed envelope, call Elizabeth Chandler at 502-276-5404, or visit: waterfrontgardens.org/support



Youth Education



Wanda Peck

Youth Education Specialist

Once, as a child, my older sister peeked her head into my bedroom and asked if I would like to go on a picnic. Ecstatically, I jumped up, rifled through my toy box and found my red, plastic picnic basket. I dashed into the kitchen to help prepare our feast: two tuna salad sandwiches; some grapes; and, a thermos of blue Kool-Aid. My sister, having just acquired her license, proudly drove my parents' Dodge Caravan to the park nearest our home in southwest Louisville. Upon arrival, we walked down the familiar path to the muddy banks of the Ohio River. We spread out an old sheet, trying to avoid the exposed roots that separated the land from the water. As we ate, we watched barges haul goods down the river, and I wondered if it was possible to swim across to Indiana. Ants circumnavigated our legs, searching for crumbs, and someone down the shoreline caught a bluegill with a nightcrawler bait.

How fortunate I am to have grown up in this beautiful river city and had so many connective experiences to nature. I am certain that all the picnics, hikes, camping trips, and horseback rides over the years fostered my passion for teaching children about plants and animals. As the youth education specialist at Waterfront Botanical Gardens, it is my goal to facilitate authentic outdoor learning experiences for the youth of our city in order to stimulate the same curiosity and lifelong appreciation of the natural world that I have.

Is there a special child in your life that would love to spend some time learning and playing outdoors this summer? If so, please consider signing them up for our **Sprouts Summer Camps** at The Avish.



Education 100



Elizabeth Chandler
Development Manager

Since I first joined the WBG team in 2018, I've gotten to know our wonderful group of Education 100 supporters. Each of these individuals had the vision and foresight to support the Gardens before they became a reality. To date, there are over 100 individuals, foundations, and businesses who have joined the Education 100. Their collective support was crucial to the progress we've made and we will be forever thankful.

Now, we are excited to announce that the backsides of the 100 columns surrounding the Graeser Family Education Center are available for sponsorship. When you make a commitment of \$10,000, you will be permanently recognized at the Education Center. You too can make an impact and support our future development.



SPROUTS SUMMER CAMPS

Waterfront Botanical Gardens

\$150.00 (\$125.00 for WBG members)

For the first time, Waterfront Botanical Gardens will be offering summer camps for young learners in the summer of 2020. These week-long, half-day camps will include investigative garden activities, craft projects, outdoor play, and opportunities to create lasting friendships. All camps will take place at our satellite, living classroom: The Gardens at the Avish Estate & Greenhouse in Harrods Creek, Prospect.

Attention Donors: We want all of our youth to have the opportunity to join us for our Sprouts Summer Camps, regardless of cost limitations for families. For \$150, you can sponsor a child to attend one of our week-long camps. If you would like to sponsor a camper this summer, please contact Elizabeth Chandler at echandler@waterfrontgardens.org.

ECO EXPLORERS

The Gardens at Avish & Greenhouse

June 22 - 26, 9 am - 1 pm

Ages 7-9

Pack your bags and get ready for an adventure as we set off to travel around the world — in one week! Campers will learn about the plants and animals that inhabit different ecosystems around the world.

DIRTY! MUDDY! MESSY!

The Gardens at Avish & Greenhouse

June 29 - July 3, 9 am - 1 pm

Ages 4-6

Learning in the garden can sometimes get a little grubby, but prepare to get messy as we spend the week digging into what lives underground and getting the dirt on how soil helps plants grow.

GROWING GARDENERS

The Gardens at Avish & Greenhouse

July 6 - 10, 9 am - 1 pm

Ages 7-9

How do you grow a gardener? Fun in the sun, plenty of water, and lots of hands-on gardening activities will help to foster skills and build confidence in this week designed to inspire junior horticulturalists.

FABLES, FLOWERS, & FAIRYTALES

The Gardens at Avish & Greenhouse

July 13 - 17, 9 am - 1 pm

Ages 4-6

Step into the Garden and onto the pages of some of history's most beloved children's stories. Science, art, and dramatic play activities will connect fantasy characters to our real-world environment.

NATURE MAKERSPACE

The Gardens at Avish & Greenhouse

July 27 - 31, 9 am - 1 pm

Ages 7-9

Ready! Set! Make! In this STEM-inspired week, campers will get a chance to imagine, plan, and create collaborative projects made from natural and recycled materials.

For more camp information contact:

**WPeck@
waterfrontgardens.org**

Registrations for all camp opportunities is available on our website:
waterfrontgardens.org



"To plant a garden is to believe in tomorrow."

-Audrey Hepburn

BY JAMIE BURGHARDT

BELIEVE

Helen Harrigan believed a botanical garden was what Louisville needed. She was among Waterfront Botanical Gardens' first believers. The goal of building a regional urban botanical garden catapulted forward with a \$1.5 million bequest she left when she passed away in 1999.

One of our region's "greenest thumbs," Helen loved bearded irises, daylilies, hostas and roses. It's safe to say that as a dedicated gardener and plant enthusiast, she appreciated a wide array of plants and looked for horticultural beauty across each of Kentuckiana's four seasons.

In honor of Helen's vision and passion, the first garden area outside of the Mary Lee Duthie Garden is taking shape in 2020. Located in-between the bus turnaround and Water Wall, along the broad paved brick pathway, is a 135-foot-long corridor of improved soil. It is a blank canvas being transformed into a mixed border of shrubs, small trees, dwarf conifers, bulbs, and herbaceous perennials.



Jamie Burghardt
Director of Horticulture
& Education

CONCEIVE

Where do you begin in designing a modern garden border? The goal of this garden is to honor a green thumb who was passionate about plants and provided the 'seed money' for location and construction of our botanical garden.

Besides improving the soil, which began last summer, understanding the topography, path of the sun, and overall visual experience when walking the brick walkway all converge to imagine this new garden. Typical design elements came into play: foliage texture, plant form, color, unity, repetition, and rhythm need to be addressed. But overall, this border needs to be populated with a diverse palette of plants. Not only does this provide visual interest and educational inspiration, it fits hand-in-hand with increasing plant diversity in our living botanical collections. Lastly, with support from the Louisville Area Daylily Society, the border also needs to provide an opportunity to feature daylilies in a fresh, modern way.

Small flowering trees and shrubs will team up with tall ornamental grasses and perennials (such as Oriental and species lily, rudbeckia and ornamental grasses) to form the seasonal backdrop of the long border. In the middle depths are other flowering shrubs, dwarf conifers, and medium-size perennials including false cypress, shrub rose, abelia, panicle hydrangea, bearded iris, rose mallow, garden phlox, joe-pye-weed, bluestar, and wood sage. In the foreground is a mosaic of short-stature perennials and groundcover-type plantings ranging from creeping phlox, pinks and stonecrop to compact selections of tickseed, black-eyed Susan, bee balm, evening primrose, aster, and more. Bulbs destined for the border include reliable daffodil, resurrection lily, species tulip, Dutch hyacinth, crocus, reticulate iris, and flowering onion.



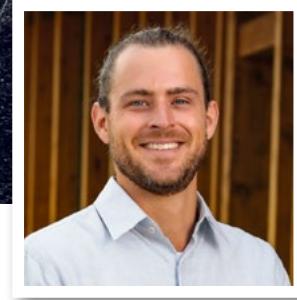
While a landscape architect's garden usually focuses on sweeps of plants in concise locations and contrived sweeps and blobs, a gardener's garden is usually much more diverse (or chaotic depending on your perspective and talents), with a richer tapestry of plant species and varieties to admire, compare and enjoy. The Helen Harrigan Garden will be the latter where plants grow shoulder to shoulder. Expect them to compete for your visual attention and admiration as they explode in floral color and foliage displays across the growing season.

ACHIEVE

The first plants to provide structure to the Helen Harrigan Garden were planted in January and February, thanks to our mild winter. Robin® red holly and hybrid Little Girl magnolias provided repetitive, rhythmic accents every 25-30 feet. By late March, a wide array of flowers and grasses made it into their permanent garden locations. In April and May – as material in the greenhouse reached maturity or wholesale nursery orders were delivered – groundcovers, shrubs, and late-season perennials were inserted into the composition. By midsummer, focus turns to ordering fall-planted bulbs. Editing, adding, dividing and transplanting will likely continue over the first few (several) years since “a garden is never done.”

Keeping a seasonal phenology log was also helpful in creating potentially breathtaking mixed border displays. Phenology is the study of seasonal happenings, such as when the first crocus blooms, the robins return, or the exact date when the ginkgo tree drops its yellow leaves each fall. By noticing when plants are at a particular seasonal highlight and coincides with that of another, you can elevate visual impact. For example, a vivid border display in spring would occur if an eastern redbud tree is underplanted with Woodstock Dutch hyacinth emerging through stems of Amazing Grace creeping phlox. Or, Cornelian cherry is underplanted with yellow daffodils and blue glory-of-the-snow. By contrast in autumn, imagine the look of a fothergilla clothed in orange-red leaves with lavender-flowering asters and yellowing stems of bluestar nearby. You never fail with winterberry, dried seedheads of Autumn Joy stonecrop and juniper juxtaposed, especially when viewed with a 2-inch snowfall after the winter solstice.

Helen Harrigan believed a Louisville botanical garden should happen. Indeed it has. She believed in the need, the possibilities, and the future. This is the essence of any garden. The new mixed border of her namesake will display a diverse palette of plants that any gardener and visitor will love to experience. The Helen Harrigan Garden will be a cyclical reminder that a garden is one of eternal possibilities...and the future. **BELIEVE**



Pioneers

Experiencing my first Spring at Waterfront Botanical Gardens has been invigorating. I have enjoyed watching the bulbs that we planted last fall poke through the soil and fresh new leaves pop from barren branches on the trees and shrubs. As I look beyond our manicured beds, I realize that the plants we put in the ground last fall are not waking from their winter dormancy alone. I am surrounded by trees with their leaves starting to show and cannot help but marvel at their resilience, beginning yet another growing season on an abandoned landfill. I am thankful that their persistence helped start the ecological processes that allowed our plants to prosper.

Many of the trees that grow naturally onsite are considered pioneer species. Pioneer species are those that have adapted to grow in tough conditions and are often the first species found on inhospitable sites. Their presence is one of the first steps nature takes to provide nutrients and habitat for species that follow them into a forest's maturity.

The difficult growing conditions on top of the reclaimed landfill where the Gardens are located are the same ones taken advantage of by pioneer trees. These trees were the first trees onsite to drop their leaves and begin to build our soil's organic layer. They benefitted from the long hours of full sunlight that allowed them to rapidly grow their canopies and provide shelter for the foraging flocks of songbirds and perches for raptors hunting the fields.

Andrew Hagerty
Horticulturist

One of the pioneer trees that has helped transition the old Ohio Street Dump for the Botanical Gardens is black locust, *Robinia pseudoacacia*. **Black Locust, like other pioneer tree species, have a fast growing and extensive root system that push their way through our compacted clay soils creating pathways for water and air to penetrate the ground.** This web of roots also provides food for the many lifeforms needed for the development of healthy soil. As the sprawling root systems ebb and flow with the seasons, their growth and dieback provide food for springtails, nematodes, and other microfauna. However, Black Locust roots also stand out because they are especially adept at enriching nutrient-devoid soils. Their roots have specialized nodules which host nitrogen-fixing bacteria. This allows them to fix nitrogen from the air into the soil. The harnessed nitrogen is then available to other nearby plants.

The trees that made the Gardens their home before we broke ground started many of the ecological processes we hope to enhance. Those trees created habitats for wildlife and plants to prosper in the middle of our city. They helped break up and add nutrients and life to our compacted clay soils. **As we continue to grow and add our own amendments to nurture new life on top of the landfill, I will always be grateful to the pioneering trees that started it all.**

Events



Farmer and the Foodie



Gardens aGlimmer



Creative Mornings



Jon Carloftis and Margot Shaw



Eminence Third Grade



Yoga



Wreath Making



Learn more about events
on our website:
waterfrontgardens.org/events

Chelsea Flower Show

Where quintessentially British Gardening and royalty intersect

BY CHRIS PADGETT

Each year in late May, the grounds of the Royal Hospital Chelsea in London, home to 300 Chelsea pension veterans, transforms into the world's most famous garden show: the Royal Horticultural Society Chelsea Flower Show. In many respects, the show is akin to the Kentucky Derby, but for gardeners.

Like the Derby, the show is quite historic. Its origin dates back to 1827 during the reign of King George IV. One of its creators was Sir Henry Veitch, a nursery owner in Chelsea, who sent traveling botanists out all over the world to seek out plant species and developed many new hybrids including the first hybrid orchid. The modern version of the show was created in 1913, when the first Bonsais were shown in the United Kingdom.

The Great Pavilion is approximately three acres under roof and showcases the very best specimens of every conceivable flower from the very best 100 nurseries throughout the United Kingdom and beyond. The entire show consists of about 23 acres with about 500 exhibitors and gardens. Garden designers begin with a blank canvas and must bring in everything. Visitors come from countries all over the world to experience the show.

For 2019, the flower show theme was "Reconnecting with Nature." Three major gardens stood out:

The Back to Nature Garden co-designed by the Duchess of Cambridge with Andree Davies and Adam White. The goal of the garden was to encourage young people to get outdoors, experience nature, and play. The design included plant material considered robust, safe, and tailored for children playing in it. Elements included bluebells and ferns and a natural woodland look. A hollowed-out log, a woodland stream, and a small platform treehouse with a view into the garden rounded out the garden.



The D-Day Garden honored the 75th anniversary of the Allied Forces landing at Normandy



A display of delphiniums and begonias by Blackmore and Langdon



A close up of peonies in the Great Pavilion

A second highlight of the show was the D-Day Garden, designed by John Everiss, to honor the 75th anniversary of the World War II event. The garden was designed with the input of veterans and included design elements meaningful to the veterans who landed on the beaches of Normandy: the sea, the fear of drowning, and the struggle of soldiers to make it on the beach. The garden included sculptures of soldiers and a veteran looking back on his younger self. The violet sea thrift flower, which was present on the beaches of Normandy, carpeted the garden. Upon the completion of the show, the garden was permanently installed at Arromanches in Normandy, France.

In 2018, the rose world lost one of the greatest modern rosarians with the passing of Sir David Austin. The firm bearing his name won its 25th gold medal at the Chelsea for its secret garden-themed rose garden. Chelsea honored his contributions to the gardening world and his lifelong passion for roses with a special exhibit inside the Great Pavilion.

OTHER SHOW HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDED:

One of everything: The Great Pavilion included an enormous display of every conceivable flower and houseplant. You name the plant or flower and its very best specimens were on display under the big tent.

DISTILLERY GARDENS: Foxglove factored prominently in Helen Elks-Smith's Warner's Distillery Garden which was inspired by American architect Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater. Warner's served gin-based cocktails nearby. Warner's was one of three gardens sponsored by a distillery company.



The Morgan Stanley garden



Some of the daffodils displayed by Walkers Bulbs

VISITOR TIPS

Plan ahead: Tickets go on sale in September and are limited to 157,000. They sell out quickly.

Arrive early: Gates open at 8 a.m. and you can avoid the larger crowds later in the day

No need to take notes:

Ambassadors offer free garden design schematics and plant listings at each garden and exhibit.

Three more: If you want to pair a visit to the Chelsea Flower Show with other must-see gardens around London, consider a visit to RHS Kew

Gardens, Hampton Court Palace Gardens, and RHS Wisley (the flagship garden of the Royal Historical Society). These three different gardens are a short train ride from London and each require a full day for a proper visit.

Watch from home: Video broadcasts recorded by the BBC of the Chelsea Flower Show can be found on YouTube. Be inspired by the world's most famous garden show without ever having to leave your home. Just search for Chelsea Flower Show on YouTube.

SIT AND SIP: Several of the gardens were interactive. At the Wedgwood Garden, guests were invited to pull up a chair at a tea bar and sample several teas served in the latest Wedgwood teacup designs. Both the tea and the cups were available for sale nearby.

LOCKS AND ALL: The Welcome to Yorkshire Garden, designed by Mark Gregory, brought an entire lock into Chelsea and scored both a Gold medal and the People's Choice Award. The garden included a canal, locks, lupines, delphiniums, a lockkeeper's cottage, vegetables, a prairie meadow, and promoted the ecological benefits of canal systems.

WILL GARDENING SAVE THE WORLD? Tom Dixon partnered with IKEA to stage the Gardening Will Save the World Garden and imagined the future of urban gardening. On two levels, the garden suggested both technology and supernatural ideas to grow hyper natural edible plants and vegetables in the future.

The show included a fierce jury competition for garden product of the year which was presented in 2019 to the HOTBIN Composter. The device is a 52-gallon compost bin that claims to speed up the composting process and produce compost in 30-90 days. It includes a clever tap to retrieve compost tea. Another product worth a mention were compostable seed trays by a company called Haxnicks. Made from a combination of bamboo and rice which makes them biodegradable and compostable, the manufacturer claims the trays can last five or more years.

All good things must come to an end and at the end of the Chelsea Flower Show everything is broken down and either trucked away or sold to the public. While visiting the Roots in Finland Garden, sponsored by Kyro Distillery, which won a Silver and was designed by Finnish garden designer Taina Suonio, I overheard another visitor remark on the beauty of a red birch tree, towering a good 15-20 feet above the garden. "It's for sale," the designer commented and offered a price to the visitor.



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“Never underestimate the healing power of a quiet moment in the garden.”

Unknown Author