

NewsLeaf Friends of the Arboretum Newsletter

Building positive relationships between people and the land through support of the UW–Madison Arboretum

Spring 2025

Volume XL No. 2

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Native Plant Sale



The Native Plant Sale returns this spring. Mark your calendars for the tent sale—May 17, 2025. Early shopping is available for Friends at 9:00 a.m. Sales to the general public open at 10:00 a.m. and will continue until plants sell out. For a list of available plants, visit foamadison.org or use the QR code below.



Grass-to-Gardens project site at Hamilton Middle School

Grass-to-Gardens Initiative

This spring, we proudly sponsored our fourth annual Grass-to-Gardens initiative. As part of our mission to build positive relationships between people and the land, the initiative was designed to reduce turf grass and increase the number of native plant gardens in the Madison area. This year's program offered either a Rain Garden Kit or a Rusty Patched Bumble Bee Garden Kit to community members—individuals or organizations who have a presence or live in the Madison area. Each kit included 32 plants which will cover 35 to 65 square feet of garden space. Applications for this year's program were accepted through the end of January.

We are excited to announce five recipients for the awards this spring. Three individual community members were awarded kits to help improve native plant gardens or convert lawn surfaces to native plants. Two of the recipients selected the Rusty Patched Bumble Bee Garden Kit, and one selected the Rain Garden Kit.

Award recipients were thrilled to receive the kits. Amy from Madison said, "Thank you so much! My kids are over the moon to receive this rain garden kit. They have been on an incredible journey replacing their gardens and lawn with native plants and have given a lot of thought to a rain garden in their front yard where so many residents will walk by and learn about the benefits." Emilie from McFarland said, "I am planning to use my gardening experience and knowledge to promote native plants among the community and neighborhood. My parents and grandparents were keen gardeners and were famous for their skills. By achieving this project, I will honor them and use the skills they taught me for a good cause."

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In addition to the residential awards, this marks the second year that the Grass-to-Gardens program partnered with Madison schools. In 2023, Friends worked with Elvehjem Elementary School to help solve a water runoff problem by establishing a rain garden. This year, Friends provided two Rusty Patch Bumble Bee kits to each of Hamilton Middle and La Follette High Schools.

At La Follette High School, the student Arboretum Club will expand pollinator plantings in the school's arboretum. Science teacher Brad Harrison and mentor to the Arboretum Club said, "We are super excited to have this plant diversity added to our pollinator project! We have been striving the last couple years to establish a home to a diverse array of pollinators (including) the Rusty Patch Bumble Bee. Thank you so much!"

At Hamilton Middle School, the Student Voice Collective created a gardening committee which plans to collaborate with Van Hise Elementary School to expand native gardens. Language teacher Rachel Kittel said, "We look forward to the opportunity to create a garden that will benefit nature and also educate students on the importance of native plants and the wildlife they support."

We wish all our award recipients great success with their important projects! Stay tuned to the *NewsLeaf* for more information about next year's Grass-to-Gardens program.

Welcome Birgit Bach, New Plant Sale Assistant

We are delighted to announce that Birgit Bach has accepted our new position as native plant sale assistant. She will support Native Plant Sale Coordinator Allison Eyring-Green in all phases of the annual plant sale, such as receiving deliveries, scheduling and working with plant sale volunteers, and responding to customer inquiries. With a background in life sciences, Birgit is passionate about native plants. She's engaged in a multiyear effort to convert her entire yard to native species and establish a large, impressive rain garden. Birgit's interests in the natural world extend to participation in Wild Ones (native plant group), the Southern Wisconsin Bird Alliance, and other environmental organizations. As former director of Madison's annual Berbee Derby race, she's accustomed to managing complex events. Regarding her new position, Birgit said "I am excited to be part of the effort to raise funds for the Arboretum programs while spreading the joy of native plant gardening in our community." Be sure to say hello to Birgit when you pick up your plant sale advanced order or when you visit the tent sale tent in May.



Birgit Bach

Thank You Arboretum Volunteers

On March 15, the Arboretum held a celebration to commemorate the vital contributions made by the many volunteers who support the Arboretum. Last year, 970 people volunteered at the Arboretum in diverse roles: leading or participating in land restoration work parties, serving as trail stewards, recording information in databases, assisting in the Native Plant and Longenecker Horticultural Gardens, participating in educational and citizen science programs, working at the welcome desk or bookstore, or helping with the Native Plant Sale. Volunteers contributed over 9,300 hours in those roles over the course of the year.

Friends of the Arboretum was delighted to help sponsor the celebration. Along with Arboretum director Patrick Bohlen and volunteer program manager Judith Kingsbury, Friends president Kate VandenBosch gave remarks at the event. To the gathered volunteers, Kate said she was "thrilled to see a dedicated corps of volunteers who make a difference for the Arboretum, for our community and our world." She expressed gratitude for volunteer contributions to Friends signature events such as the Luncheon-Lecture series and the Native Plant Sale. Last year, 66 volunteers contributed over 500 hours to the Native Plant Sale.

Friends board member Nansi Jo Colley, who attended the event and volunteered at the welcome desk, said that "it was a delightful afternoon, filled with terrific conversations with fellow volunteers and delicious cuisine. We planted seeds to take home for our gardens and consumed yummy chocolates while we listened to humorous and meaningful presentations and watched a wonderful slide show of volunteers in action."

Like Nansi Jo, many Friends board members volunteer in roles above and beyond their board service. Last year, board member Mark Horan led 16 restoration work parties at different locations in the Arboretum. He says that he finds the "restoration work extremely rewarding" and that, "special work parties, such as those on mound sites or with school leadership programs, add an additional layer of satisfaction." Other board members volunteer in the bookstore, education programs, native plant gardens, and the Native Plant Sale.

We thank all the Arboretum volunteers for their tremendous contributions! If you're interested in volunteering, visit: arboretum.wisc.edu/get-involved/volunteer/.



Friends board member Nansi Jo Colley at the welcome desk

Meet a Friend of the Arboretum

Donna Silver is a retired UW–Madison administrator, and George Savage is a retired UW–Whitewater English professor. They live on Madison’s near west side, near the Arboretum.

What do you love about the Arboretum?

Like many Arboretum lovers, we are gaga over the springtime lilac effulgence in Longenecker Botanical Garden. This annual saturation of the senses is one of Wisconsin’s botanical wonders. Although we mainly remember the colors and the scents of the lilacs, the magnolias and crab apples serve as perfect complements. We are also devoted to the variety of deciduous trees in Longenecker Garden. Since most are labeled, we quiz each other as we walk through this amazing selection of trees: Is that a cork tree? Is that an elm? (We thought they were extinct!) Is that a river birch?

What is your favorite place in the Arboretum?

Our favorite place is the Icke Boardwalk, just southeast of Longenecker Garden. We like it for different reasons. Donna enjoys the Sandhill Cranes that return to nest there nearly every spring. The male and female often stride within feet of the boardwalk. When no one is around, Donna has been known to communicate with them, imitating their guttural caws. George enjoys the end of the boardwalk, where he meditates on a wooden bench under a small roof.

What are some other reasons you chose to support the Arboretum?

Several thoughts. First, we like its history. When walking in the Arboretum, we feel just one degree of separation from Aldo Leopold, author of *A Sand County Almanac* and one of the main planners of the Arboretum at its inception in the 1930s. We appreciate how the original commitment to ecological restoration has been sustained, just as we appreciate the distinct ecosystems that thrive side by side (marshes, prairies, savannas, and deciduous/coniferous forests). We also admire how the current managers have kept a healthy balance between protecting the integrity of the landscapes (no pets, no picnics), while encouraging public use through the many well-kept trails and the wide-ranging programs.

Wild Flowers

Beautiful mortals of the glowing earth
And children of the season crowd together
In showers and sunny weather
Ye beautiful spring hours
Sunshine and all together
I love wild flowers

The rain drops lodge on the swallow’s wing
Then fall on the meadow flowers
Cowslips and enemonies all come with spring
Beaded with first showers
The skylarks in the cowslips sing
I love wild flowers

–John Clarke



Donna Silver and George Savage at the Icke Boardwalk.

Luncheon-Lectures May–June 2025

Luncheon-Lectures are held from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. in the Arboretum Visitor Center. A buffet lunch is followed by an educational presentation. Register online at foamadison.org or send a check payable to FOA to Friends of the Arboretum, 1207 Seminole Hwy., Madison, WI 53711. The cost of each Luncheon-Lecture is \$45.

Seats are still available!

Blue Plate Catering of Madison will continue to provide culinary services for the Luncheon-Lecture series this year. Enjoy the wonderful cuisine!

Meet an Arboretum staff member. An Arboretum staff member will be seated at each table during the lunch and presentation.

Wednesday May 7, 2025: Preserving Green Space in Urban Areas by Brian Ohm, Professor Emeritus, Department of Planning & Landscape Architecture, UW–Madison.

Wednesday, June 4, 2025: What’s New in the Wisconsin State Climatology Office by Steve Vavrus, Wisconsin State Climatologist.



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Fall Trips
Mississippi Riverboat Fall Colors Cruise—
October 11



Join Friends of the Arboretum for a gorgeous Mississippi Riverboat cruise. We will explore the mighty upper Mississippi, surrounded by bluffs of glowing autumn color during our three-hour adventure. During our excursion, we will enjoy a delicious buffet lunch on the riverboat—the magnificent La Crosse Queen. The La Crosse Queen is an authentic paddlewheel boat and a replica of the grand riverboats that traveled the Mississippi during the 19th century. Mark Twain won't be piloting our riverboat, but we will hear him speak from the 19th century, courtesy of FOA board member Mark Horan!

The trip is scheduled from 7:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Comfortable transportation to and from La Crosse will be provided by coach. The journey will be an exciting part of our fall color tour as we travel the breathtaking Amish country in the Coulee region of the Driftless Area.

The registration fee includes the coach, riverboat, and lunch. Cost: \$140 per person. Register online at foamadison.org or send a check payable to FOA to: Friends of the Arboretum, 1207 Seminole Hwy., Madison, WI, 53711.

Your Donations at Work

Thank you for your continued support of Friends of the Arboretum. With your help over \$140,000 has been raised so far this fiscal year. Contributions to Friends supports a wide variety of programs, including an increasing number of citizen science offerings. Citizen science programs at the Arboretum empower community members to contribute to vital environmental studies, fostering a deeper connection with nature and science.

Some key projects which involve citizen volunteers include: the **Monarch Larva Monitoring Project**, which focuses on monarch caterpillars and their habitats; the **Dragonfly Monitoring Project**, which involves tracking dragonfly populations to study their distribution and health; and the **Fungal Diversity Project**, which catalogs fungal species in the area.

These citizen science programs not only contribute to scientific knowledge but also educate and inspire participants. By involving the community in hands-on research, the Arboretum fosters a collaborative approach to conservation and environmental stewardship. Thank you for your support of these programs through your donation to the Friends of the Arboretum fund.

— Erica Lee, Advancement Manager, UW—Madison Arboretum



Shop the Native Plant Sale Tent Sale

May 17, 2025

Early shopping for Friends at 9:00 a.m.

General Public from 10:00 a.m. until plants sell out