

Olbrich Botanical Gardens Quarterly Report February 2019

Visitor comment:

“Whenever I travel to the Madison area, I like to make the Olbrich Botanical Gardens a destination stop. Twice I have been able to experience the fall light show [GLEAM] which transforms the gardens into a magical space. I highly recommend that light show which is different every year. Strolling the gardens is also a beautiful way to while away a summer afternoon. Besides the lovely gardens outside and inside, there is a great gift shop where you can purchase a memento to help you remember the lovely experience in the gardens. Please allow plenty of time to explore the different aspects and environs depicted.” 1/15/2019

2018 Olbrich Botanical Gardens Attendance

	2018	2017
Attendance (counted from 9 – 4 only + event participants in 2017 and 9 – 8 pm (when open late in 2018))	335,153	325,530
Total Bolz Conservatory Attendance (includes members & free children, Blooming Butterflies and Holiday Show)	111,950	Not available

Construction Update:

Learning Center: The cistern is completed – the ‘concrete box’ to the right shows it fully enclosed. The learning center footprint is larger, and the foreground shows the future learning center covered by blankets to protect from frost. Simultaneously, the contractor is working on the fire protection sprinkler system in the existing building as well as putting in the pipes that will ultimately connect the learning center with the existing building.



The 60,000 gallon cistern

Production Greenhouse: The construction activity in the new greenhouse is less dramatic – foundation work has begun and the greenhouse manufacturer is working with the contractor and architects to submit the design and engineering details that are required to be approved before actual fabrication of the structure can begin. The project’s selected environmental control system – the Wadsworth SEED – has been installed ahead of schedule in the Bolz Conservatory because the existing environmental control system failed; it didn’t make sense to repair when it was due to be replaced in 2019 with the Wadsworth SEED. Additional components will be added as the production greenhouse is completed.

Bolz Conservatory:



*l to r, Terry Hodge, Amanda Dix,
Colten Blackburn*

Bolz Conservatory staffing has completely changed in the last 4 years following retirements in 2017 and 2018. Every member of the team supports the Bolz Conservatory and production greenhouse daily tasks and supports ongoing programs and exhibitions, but each take on a ‘specialty’ area of responsibility. Colten Blackburn, the Bolz Conservatory Curator leads the team and is responsible for approximately 800 separate tropical plant accessions. Amanda Dix, the Assistant Conservatory Curator for Plant Production oversees the production of more than 25,000 plants from seed, cuttings, and plugs that support the outdoor gardens, the flower shows, the gift store, plant sales, and donor relations. Terry Hodge, Conservatory and Orchid Horticulturist is responsible for the orchid collection (more than 700 accessions) and orchid outreach. Irene Padlin, the newest member of the team, will be responsible for the interior plants in the Visitor Center lobby and meeting rooms. She will work about 18 hours per week and assist in production and with weekend watering in all areas. Conservatory staff are managing two facilities – the Bolz Conservatory and the offsite rental greenhouses in Fitchburg. This requires a lot of coordination

and daily travel between the two locations – even plant production volunteers are making the trip to Fitchburg to help with the seeding and transplanting of the spring and summer annuals for the outdoor gardens.

Outdoor Gardens:

The horticulturists who tend the outdoor gardens are starting **winter pruning** in January and, earlier this year, were worried about the impact of minimal snow in mid-January on the perennial plants in the collection – some of that worry has been alleviated in late January. Following such a wet summer and fall, the unusual winter weather may impact normally very hardy perennials. The staff are also creating their annual designs and bed designs which are presented to coworkers and supervisor. Annuals – primarily in containers -- are changed out 3 times during the growing season – spring, summer and fall. That insures that the Gardens look good for all visitors. In addition to designs, the staff are preparing for spring and summer projects, the Plant Sale with the Pros, and even GLEAM, and doing research on the latest trends and research in ornamental horticulture..



l to r, Avery Marcott, Phillip Stutz, Dan Schuchknecht, Samara Eisner, Katey Pratt, Kate McWhirter, Sam Malone, Erin Presley, Jeff Epping, Aaron Wilkie

2018 Volunteer Hours:

The three highest categories of volunteer hours include Programs, Exhibitions, Events @ 6459 hours; Outdoor Garden Crews @ 5415 hours; Greeters (Customer Service) @ 4450 hours. Total hours contributed by individuals and groups: **27,123 TOTAL HOURS in 2018.**

Education:

Tropical Explorer begins February 5 and continues through the month for K – 5 classrooms. In addition, education staff are recruiting for a new **Schumacher Horticulture Library** Librarian who will lead a group of 24 library volunteers and staff the library. The Education staff are also engaged in the construction of the new Learning Center which involves keeping up with the details such as light fixtures, tile selections, and all those little details that are part of a major project.

Programs and Exhibitions:

Holiday Express Flower and Model Train Show was very successful with the *I Spy* theme in

2018. 17,234 visitors enjoyed the show during the month of December. Upcoming winter programming includes Cocktails in the Conservatory, Rainforest Rhythms, and Winter Concerts on Sunday afternoons beginning February 17 through March 31.

LOOK: Tropical Tessellations is an innovative replacement for the Spring Flower Show which won't happen due to the construction. LOOK features two artists, Peter Krsko and Robert Anderson whose works will be featured in the Bolz Conservatory. Special admission will apply and evening viewings will be available Friday evenings during the show from February 16 through March 24.



Peter Krsko sculpture