

**Board of Park Commissioners  
Olbrich Botanical Gardens Quarterly Report  
April 2021**

Who said winter was slow at a botanical garden? That may have been the case years ago, but not any longer for Olbrich Botanical Gardens. This past quarter included flower shows, awards, national news articles, grants, and more!

**2022 American Horticultural Society Garden Stewardship Award**

In March 2022, the American Horticultural Society (AHS) awarded Olbrich Botanical Gardens with the [2022 Garden Stewardship Award](#). This award is for public gardens that embrace and exemplify sustainable horticultural practices in design, maintenance, and/or programs. “Olbrich Botanical Garden is an amazing asset within its community and we are delighted to honor the garden for its commitment to creating a beautiful environment using sustainable practices,” said Marcia Zech, AHS Board Chair. Like many botanical gardens, Olbrich practices water-conserving techniques such as using an underground cistern to collect rainwater, establishing rain gardens, and selecting site-appropriate plants. What sets Olbrich apart is its inclusion of gravel garden technology, which essentially replaces soil with gravel and requiring virtually no watering and weeding for the plants. North Carolina Botanical Garden was the first recipient of this award in 2021.

**American Public Garden Association Garden Scholar Recipient**



In March 2022, Horticulturist Erin Presley (on right) received the inaugural Gerry Donnelly Scholarship. This scholarship is part of the American Public Garden Association’s Garden Scholar program. The scholarship committee voted unanimously to award Erin this scholarship

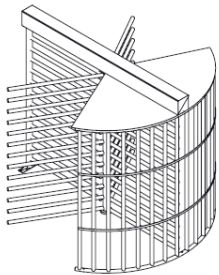
as they felt she is a promising emerging public garden leader. Thanks to the scholarship, Erin will attend the 2022 American Public Garden Association's Annual Conference in Portland, OR. The theme of this year's conference is "[CommUNITY of Gardens](#)" which will focus on how gardens harness the individual and collective power to ignite connection, protection, and change. Portland is a great city for Erin to visit as their Parks and Recreation Department proudly includes [6 public gardens](#) as part of their park system. Their well-known city public gardens include the famous [Japanese Garden](#) is one of the 6 parks within this system. . Erin is estatic to have this opportunity to learn from her fellow public garden peers and to visit the many beautiful and varied public gardens in Portland.

### New York Times



March was also the month where the New York Times highlighted the work of Director of Horticulture Jeff Epping in the article "[Why Gravel Gardens are Better Than They Sound](#)" Writer Margaret Roach contacted Jeff having heard about this work with gravel gardens. The interest in this article has since sparked additional articles in other publications and speaking engagements. The reach of this article and exposure for Olbrich Botanical Gardens was immense.

### Wisconsin Tourism Capital Investment Grant



In February, Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers announced \$21.9 million in grants to 27 local governments and organizations for [major tourism-related capital improvement projects](#). Olbrich Botanical Society received \$145,650 to support accessibility capital projects to make existing infrastructure more accessible for visitors of all abilities. Thanks to this grant, Olbrich will be able to replace the current pedestrian exit garden gate with one that is accessible for visitors in wheelchairs or strollers. It will also fund projects that improve garden pathways making the visitor experience better for all visitors. The completion deadline for projects covered by this grant is the end of 2023.

### Events & Exhibitions

The end of 2021 and the beginning of 2022 saw the return of many well-loved and attended events and exhibitions.

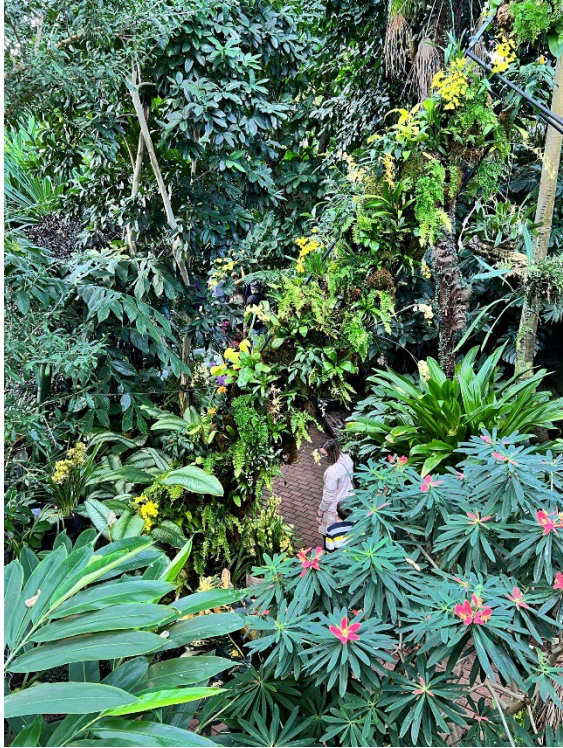




The theme for the December 2021 **Holiday Train Show** was Planes, Trains, and Automobiles. The show featured an array of colorful flowers and foliage surrounded by elements that represent the various forms of transportation.







February's **Orchid Escape Show** featured the theme Revel in the Rainbow. The Bolz Conservatory was filled with orchids featuring blooms from the rainbow. The Olbrich Maintenance team constructed metal archs representing the arch of a rainbow that were covered with orchids and other colorful plants. Visitors looked in awe as orchids were featured from the ground to the top levels of the Conservatory. Immediately after the Orchid Escape Show, Conservatory staff completed the expansive pruning project during the 2-week shutdown in March. Arborist from the Parks Division assisted with the removal of a few trees that were too big for the space.





In March, Olbrich very talented Horticulturists transformed the Atrium into a **Spring Show** prism party - dividing the space into monochromatic displays to represent Roy G. Biv's Rainbow Rooms. They featured every room of the house and dedicated a color of the rainbow to each room. Who would not want to eat a meal in a red kitchen or enjoy a puzzle in an indigo living room? So much creativity and beauty made for a delightful spring show. For the first time ever the show ran for three weeks and attendance was fantastic! The Gardens' welcomed over 11,000 visitors - a record breaking number, including 4,000 members who enjoyed their free admission benefit! The last Saturday of the show, welcomed over 1,000 visitors! The explosion of colors continues, as visitors were able to purchase plants from the show in a special spring show plant sale.

## Volunteers



For the first time since 2020, Olbrich celebrated the time and talents of the hard working volunteers. In total, 135 volunteers and staff gathered to celebrate the work of our volunteers. Mayor Satya Rhones-Conway and Parks Superintendent Eric Knepp spoke at the event and shared their thanks to the volunteers as well. This event was altered a bit from historic events

due the state of the pandemic at that time. However, everyone was thrilled to be together for this special occasion once again.

Volunteers are ambassadors for Olbrich so it is important they stay up to date with current events in and around the gardens. On March 23, volunteers enjoyed Vol-A-Pa-Loo-Za where horticulture staff shared their spring and summer plans for the gardens. The City of Madison recorded the presentation so those that were not able to attend could view it at their leisure. The program is viewable on the Olbrich's [YouTube channel](#).