

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

Olbrich Botanical Gardens welcomed about 100,000 visitors between June 1 and Aug 31 who enjoyed the outdoor gardens, the Bolz Conservatory, about 100 classes and onsite plant interpretation, garden-centered special events, and a welcoming Botanical Center with a newly refurbished Gift Shop and Schumacher Library. Weddings and receptions were hosted most weekends throughout the summer. While PHMDC lifted COVID-19 restrictions for vaccinated staff, volunteers, and visitors at the end of May, Olbrich cancelled a signature event, *Blooming Butterflies*. This was because of the lead-time needed for planning, the large number of families with unvaccinated youth likely to attend, and the desire to avoid crowding that would have deterred more cautious visitors from enjoying the gardens during the peak summer season.

**2021 Monthly Attendance**

<b>Total Attendance</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>Prev 5-Year Average</b>
June 1-30	28,756	7,365	34,778	26,784
July 1-31	38,863	15,785	44,730	39,107
August 1-31	33,013	20,361	50,661	39,318

**2021 Bolz Conservatory Admissions**

<b>Category</b>	<b>June 2021</b>	<b>July 2021</b>	<b>Aug 2021</b>
Free - Age 5 and under	314	367	292
Free - Member	457	583	584
Free - Scholarship (Donor Funded)	2	7	3
Free -- Wed & Sat Mornings	1,774	2,266	1,528
General Admission	3,516	4,860	4,043
<b>Total Admissions</b>	<b>6,063</b>	<b>8,083</b>	<b>6,450</b>

**2021 Revenue Sharing Update**

	<b>June 2021</b>	<b>July 2021</b>	<b>Aug 2021</b>
Total Revenue	\$21,048.00	\$29,136.00	\$24,234.00
Total Expenses	\$3,219.35	\$4,038.39	\$3,006.97
Net Revenue	\$17,828.65	\$25,097.61	\$21,227.03
Revenue Formula	50% net rev	50% net rev	50% net rev
Paid to City of Madison	\$8,914.33	\$12,548.81	\$10,613.52

**Education**

Olbrich held 91 classes and self-guided visits June-August, with 1,970 people attending via either zoom or in-person. Olbrich staff taught many classes. More than 430 people from 20 states participated in the Melinda Myers virtual lecture series. To provide a better outdoor tour experience, OBS purchased personal audio devices, compatible with hearing aids, for use during outdoor tours for better communication from the tour leader while physical distancing. A highlight for the Youth and Family Program was re-introducing Little Sprouts Gardening Classes; 350 people participated in 22 garden-based classes in the Children's Kitchen Garden. OBS Education Intern Mickenzee Okon helped develop and deliver these classes. Olbrich donated over 900 pounds of produce from that garden to Goodman Community Center's Fritz Food Pantry and Second Harvest Food Bank of Southern Wisconsin over the course of the season.

Horticulture Librarian Eva Stefanski reconfigured furniture and functional areas in Schumacher library to allow better physical distancing. She re-opened the Library for in-person use daily (10 am to 1 pm) on August 30. Eva will continue to develop online library services that complement the onsite library experience. For example, she introduced online access to library collection; people can go to <https://www.librarycat.org/lib/OlbrichGardens>, find books in Olbrich's collection, and OBS members can reserve them for check out.

The Grand Opening for the Frautschi Family Learning Center is Saturday, October 16, 10 am to 2 pm. Mayor Satya Rhodes-Conway will deliver welcoming remarks and cut the ceremonial ribbon, followed by an Open House. The Building has been awarded Platinum LEED certification—the highest level possible!

### **Outdoor Gardens**

The tropical Madison temperatures and lack of rain this summer challenged the horticulture staff; visitors were delighted with the result. Some highlights include:

- In the **Herb Garden**, Olbrich staff collaborated with food sovereignty advocate Elena Terry (Ho-Chunk) and other Indigenous agriculture experts to select plants showcasing the beauty and diversity of crops important to Native Americans here in the Midwest. With help from Olbrich staff Rita Peters (Ho-Chunk) and a Starkweather-Atwood-Schenk-Yahara Neighborhood Association grant, Olbrich hosted two milkweed soup tastings with the assistance from UW Madison's Wunk Sheek student organization and the Indian Community School in Franklin, Wisconsin. Goodman Community Center's Seed to Table Program partnered with Olbrich in the Herb Garden to seed, plant, and harvest lettuce; it was then donated to Goodman's Fritz Food Pantry.
- The **Event Garden**—the location for outdoor weddings—again chose the Pantone colors of the year (Ultimate Gray & Illuminating Yellow) as the theme for plantings.
- The "Butterfly Walk" along the **Sunken Garden** delights with 1000's of butterflies enjoying the pollinator plants on a sunny afternoon.
- The **Thai Garden and Sala** continue to attract visitors nationally and even internationally. In August, planning began for the repair of the Sala's structure, with a City contractor to be selected this fall, immediate repairs completed in the next 6 months, and a plan for significant repairs to be ready in 2022 and hopefully completed by the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of the Thai Garden (2027).
- New **Frautschi Family Learning Center gardens** feature native grasses, perennials, and woodies. A rain garden, installed near Lussier Terrace, will collect and filter both rain and run-off from the building. Plantings along the Long Walk feature Wisconsin natives and will be complete in October.

Horticulture staff bring a little Olbrich into the community. In June, they provided plants and staff to install summer containers on State Street. Olbrich staff also collaborated with Madison Water Utility workers to design and install a 3-tiered Gravel Garden at their Olin Street facility. The structure, an old water fountain, was prepped, filled with soil, and then gravel added. Olbrich staff laid out the planting; Water Utility staff planted the perennials and grasses.

### **Bolz Conservatory and Greenhouses**

Poinsettias arrived in August; staff are propagating 918 of these for Olbrich's Holiday Express Holiday Show, Olbrich Gardens Gift Shop, as well as distribution to OBG donors by Development staff. In production, we are also growing around 153 floral mums for the Gift Shop and have seeded primula for the spring. Fall perennials and annuals, grown in the greenhouses and then finished outside, were used by Horticulture staff in outdoor display beds and to create fall containers. For Olbrich's Autumn Pollinator Plant Sale, staff grew 271 perennial natives and nativars (cultivars of natives); gardeners picked up their purchases in September.

Supplied by a family farm in northern Wisconsin, 6 new Coturnix Quail joined the current flock and adjusted quickly to life in the Bolz Conservatory. Not only do visitors love seeing them, but they are also an integral part of our integrated pest management plan. They are excellent predators of insects (mainly the palmetto bug) that live in the soil.

Preparations for the 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Orchid Escape in February 2022 are underway. This exhibit will be bigger and better than ever. Staff have begun flushing out concept ideas; orchid ordering is now complete. Show preparation started in August and will continue until the exhibit opens in February.

### Exhibits and Special Events

- **Summer Concerts, Tuesdays, June 8-August 17.** Nine outdoor summer concerts brought 2,518 people to the gardens, with tickets sold online to control crowding and a fee waiver to anyone who requested one. Three of the nine concerts were free community events with 267 concert lovers attended these.
- **Summer Breeze, June 24 & June 25.** The second annual Summer Breeze offered an opportunity for families to relax, enjoy, and support the Gardens. Guests enjoyed a variety of lawn games, entertainers, and food vendors.
- **Home Garden Tour, July 9-10.** With 2 days of perfect weather, 8 spectacular home gardens, 140 friendly, knowledgeable volunteers at the sites, and an astounding 1,650 Garden enthusiasts enjoying the tour, the 2021 Home Garden Tour was a resounding success. Olbrich Botanical Gardens also partnered with the Wisconsin Historical Society to provide education about sites within the tour area that are of cultural significance to Indigenous People of the past and present, in acknowledgement of their deeply rooted stewardship of the land.
- **Pollinator Programming.** With Olbrich's *Blooming Butterflies* 2021 cancelled, alternate outdoor programming to engage families in understanding the importance of pollinators was offered June-August. Programming featured an I Spy Pollinator Walk for families (with a free coupon for a junior cone at the Chocolate Shoppe); a StoryWalk installed in the outdoor gardens along the Birch Walk of the book *Señorita Mariposa*; and June & August Pollinator Plant Sales.
- **Gleam, Art in a New Light, Wed/Thurs/Fri/Sat evenings, Sept-Oct.** Preparation for Gleam started in August, with horticulture and special exhibits staff getting the outdoor gardens ready and collaborating with artists to install their juried art. 2021 GLEAM features seven site specific installations and several lighting effects created by GLEAM team members.

### Rentals

Between June 1 and September 30, Olbrich hosted 15 weddings (most with receptions onsite). Our "Garden Season" for weddings ends with a rental on Sunday, October 31<sup>st</sup>—yes, a Halloween wedding on a Sunday morning. Over the summer, many memorials and celebrations of life—that were not possible during COVID—took place; the rush to schedule these has ended. Rentals scheduled for baby showers, birthdays, and other life events, especially on weekends, are increasing. Business meeting rentals during the week are down but slowly increasing and are often on short notice, likely due to cancellation policies combined with concerns of possible COVID upticks. Olbrich will start preparing for 2023 rentals in October as the 2023 calendar opens for reservations in March 2022.

### Volunteers

All of Olbrich's outdoor volunteers returned this past summer, including Outdoor Gardeners, Outdoor Garden Greeters & Docents, Little Sprouts Gardening Class Volunteers, and Event Volunteers for Concerts, Summer Breeze, Home Garden Tour, Plant Sales, and Gleam. A limited number of indoor volunteers assisted staff over the summer as Conservatory Maintenance Volunteers, Greenhouse Volunteers, Lobby Greeters, Conservatory Docents & Greeters, and Membership Office Volunteers. To celebrate, Olbrich invited all 2020/21 Volunteers to an Ice Cream Social on August 2; 140 volunteers and guests enjoyed their sweet treat and made small bouquets to take home from flowers out the gardens.