The Children’s Garden Revitalization is Complete!

After more than two years of fund-raising, planning and construction, the completed upgrades to The Children’s Garden will have you feeling like a kid again!

“Our final projects included whimsical new wayfinding and educational signage, as well as several new benches,” said Amy Zeigler, senior director. “A complete overhaul of the landscaping has grown into a lush and colorful backdrop for the new play structures and renovated amphitheater.”

“We couldn’t be happier with the results of the project,” said Zeigler. “We are so grateful to the many donors who helped make the garden a beautiful and enjoyable experience for children and families for years to come!”
What is your role at Hershey Gardens?
As a Butterfly Atrium Associate, I attend to all the needs of the butterflies as well as the insects and arthropods we have on display in the Zoology Zone. As a “bug handler,” I also use insects as a teaching opportunity. I will often take a bug out of its display case and hold it for guests to observe; this way guests can see it up close and learn more about it. Many times, guests who were initially afraid of a particular insect walk away having learned something, which makes them less afraid of it.

What do you find most enjoyable about your job?
It's hard to choose just one thing. I LOVE interacting with guests by answering their questions, and I try my best to get them excited—or at least appreciative—about insects and other “critters” that are all around us. Looking after some of our non-butterfly friends that the Atrium houses, like the different species of roaches and walking sticks, is so much fun. Working here has allowed me to introduce so many people to these fascinating creatures and the important role they play in the health and well-being of the planet.

How long have you worked at the Gardens?
I've been at the Gardens for almost six years now! Time flies!

Can you tell us a little bit about yourself?
After graduating from Millersville University with a degree in Art Education, I lived in Japan for three years and taught English to Japanese students! After moving back to Pennsylvania, I taught art to middle school students in Lancaster City. Then, I took a break from teaching to raise my three (beautiful and lovely) children.

How did you get interested in insects?
Lots of time outdoors with my children exposed me to more of my garden. From there, my interest in native plants and the creatures that rely on them really took off. Over the last 15 years, I’ve transformed our grassy lawn into a wildlife-friendly habitat.

How has your background helped you in your current position at the Gardens?
I think my background in education has made it easy for me to interact with guests. I hope they can sense my enthusiasm for our insects, and I try to inspire them to look more closely at all the cool creatures out there. I think that’s what a good teacher can do.

What do you like to do in your spare time?
I spend most of my spare time nurturing the habitat I created in our backyard and documenting what I see in nature journals. Besides spending tons of time planting and tending to pollinator gardens around my home and my town, I enjoy illustrating or photographing my finds. Most of the art I still do is centered on the natural world.

You're a music and sports fan, too?
Yes! I am a big fan of many genres of music, from classical to bluegrass to punk. My husband and I can often be found near a mosh pit at small concert venues in Philadelphia. My husband is from Liverpool, England, so we also like watching the Liverpool Football Club (which is actually soccer). I love ice hockey, too. My favorite team is the Hershey Bears, of course!

You have your own collection of animals and insects?
It's true! We have three cats, a tarantula, a tailless whip scorpion and some hissing cockroaches. I sometimes find and catch other insects that I’ll research to learn more, but I always release them.

Do you have a favorite part of the Gardens?
I love The Children's Garden, especially the Hoop House. It is so much fun! I used to take my kids there (and to the former outdoor Butterfly House) when they were much younger. I also love to see the native plants and the perennials, and the trees of the Arboretum. Okay, I guess I have a lot of favorites!
A Few of My Favorite Plants...
by Alyssa Hagarman, Horticulture Manager

Anyone who knows me knows that I love all plants. In fact, I have a funny little sign at my desk that reads, “Once there was a girl who loved plants. It was me! The end.”

I am often asked about my favorite plant. My reply is always the same – I can’t pick just one! However, I do have favorites in each plant category: tree, shrub, perennial and annual.

My favorite deciduous tree is Paperbark Maple (Acer griseum). I love this tree’s bark. It has this beautiful cinnamon color and it’s exfoliating, which gives it textural interest in the winter months. The fall color is amazing as well; the perfectly green leaves turn a stunning scarlet red when fall approaches.

Hydrangeas are my favorite shrub, especially white varieties. The panicle hydrangeas always get my attention; their blooms remind me of huge ice cream cones or big, puffy clouds.

The last two types of plants, perennials and annuals, are probably the hardest for me to narrow down to just one simply because there are so many to choose from. As far as perennials, I like native, pollinator-attracting plants. Plants like purple coneflower, Joe Pye weed and yarrows—they are so easy to take care of and they require little maintenance. Also, with natives becoming more popular, the green industry is hybridizing these plants to give us more color and size options to choose from.

And finally, annuals. I am really partial to summer snapdragon (Angelonia). This plant comes in a variety of shades of purple, pinks and white, and even some bi-colored varieties are now available. It is a true performer in the landscape or in a container, and you may even see a bumblebee or hummingbird visiting these plants.

If you haven’t tried my favorite plants at home, give them a try. You won’t be disappointed!

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In 2008, Hershey Gardens installed the Four Seasons Statues as a dedication to the retirement of Susan Kelly-Dreiss, long-serving executive director of the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence (PCADV).

Kelly-Dreiss lives on “Pat’s Hill,” which is located directly behind Hershey Gardens. It was at her kitchen table that a small group of women came together in 1976 to create the nation’s first state domestic violence coalition.

“Since their installation in 2008, thousands of Hershey Gardens visitors have enjoyed the statues and read the placard describing the PCADV’s work,” said Kelly-Dreiss. “However, when the statues were installed, we didn’t realize that their internal elements included iron. Unfortunately, within a few years the iron created a ‘bleed’ of rust on the surface of the statues.”

“Hershey Gardens attempted to address the rust by sanding and painting the surface of the statues several times,” said Kelly-Dreiss. “Sadly, the problem has only grown worse.”

In the past year, numerous problem-solving methods were considered and experts were consulted. “A common recommendation emerged: replace the statues with concrete versions that won’t rust,” said Kelly-Dreiss. “I volunteered to do the fundraising necessary to pay for the replacement statues. The total cost is $3,599.”

The new statues will be installed in the arboretum at Hershey Gardens in mid-September. New landscaping around the statues will be planted later this fall and in the spring.

Please consider financially supporting the new statues. To donate online, please click here. Simply select “I would like to dedicate this donation” and type in “Four Seasons Statues.” Checks can also be mailed to Hershey Gardens, 170 Hotel Road, Hershey, PA 17033. Hershey Gardens is an operating division of The M.S. Hershey Foundation, a non-profit 501(c)3 organization, so your donation is tax deductible, as allowed by law.

Thank you, Volunteers!

Throughout the summer, 21 teens volunteered their time to connect guests and families to the natural world.

“They also built professional skills, socially connected with their peers, and most importantly, they gained a better understanding of their unique impact on the community,” said Rebecca Lawrence, manager of education. “Working alongside gardening and education staff, they spent over 600 hours assisting with public programs, beautifying the grounds, and continuing the work of cultivating and harvesting fruits and vegetables.”

“Their efforts helped create more than 360 pounds of produce for families in the Cocoa Packs program,” said Lawrence. “That’s pretty remarkable.”
If chrysanthemums are your favorite fall flower, you won’t want to miss this year’s vibrant mum display!

“We are planting eight varieties representing a wide range of colors,” said Alyssa Hagarman, horticulture manager. “Of course, we’ll have the traditional red, yellow and orange, but we’ll also be featuring white, pink and purple mums, plus two varieties that are bi-colored.

“All of our mums are grown by a local wholesale grower,” said Hagarman. “When they are ready to bloom, the gardening staff and volunteers get busy planting.”

“We have a very efficient method to get more than 1,400 mums planted in just two days,” said Hagarman. “The mums are grown in 8-inch containers, which are removed when they are placed into the ground. The gardening staff use a gas-powered auger to drill holes into the beds. The auger’s bit is exactly 8 inches - a perfect fit; one mum gets planted into each hole. Once the mums are in the ground, they are watered and left to bloom until the end of the season.”

“I love chrysanthemums; they are the perfect flower to extend the blooming season into the fall,” said Hagarman. I can’t imagine a brisk fall day without them.”

This Year’s Display to Feature More Than 1,400 Colorful Mums

Look for These Chrysanthemum Varieties at Hershey Gardens This Fall

- Pobo Red
- Stacy Dazzling Orange
- Mary Yellow
- Makenzie White
- Adiva Purple
- Addison White
- Stacy Pink
- Aubrey Orange
Junior Scout “Flowers” Badge Workshop
Sunday, September 17 from 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
Junior Scouts, earn your “Flowers” Gardener badge by exploring the science and meaning of flowers! Price includes a “Flowers” badge and general admission to Hershey Gardens and the Penn-Jersey District Rose Show. After purchasing your ticket online, present it at the Scout information table to receive a checklist of activities to complete between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.
$20 per Scout, $14.50 per Scout leader
General admission ticket required for accompanying family members. Pre-registration is required here.

Bonsai Exhibit by the Susquehanna Bonsai Club
Wednesday, September 27 through Saturday, October 14
from 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. daily
Experience the living art of bonsai with this popular annual exhibit provided by the Susquehanna Bonsai Club. Exhibit located in the Hoop House, located in The Children’s Garden.

Art Exhibit by Chris Dillon
Friday, September 22 through Friday, September 29
from 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. daily
See the magnificent works of local artist Chris Dillon, who focuses on abstract and fluid art. Fluid art is the process of pouring thin, fluid acrylic paint on a canvas to create unique pieces of art. Click here to learn more about the artist and see his work. Exhibit located in the Milton & Catherine Hershey Conservatory.

Member Reception
Tuesday, September 26 from 4:30 - 6:00 p.m.
Members, join us for an evening of wine and cheese as you listen to live music and stroll the grounds. Look for your invitation in the mail!
Join Us for a Wreath Workshop!
Saturday, December 2 at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. and
Sunday, December 3 at 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.
Kick off the holiday season at Hershey Gardens’ annual wreath workshop! Participants will learn how to make a beautiful seasonal wreath with a variety of fresh greens collected from Hershey Gardens’ grounds. A continuous wire wrap technique will be taught, in which greens are bundled and secured to an 18-inch wreath form. The result is a lovely, fragrant, long-lasting seasonal decoration perfect for displaying on a door or above a fireplace mantel. All tools and supplies are provided; refreshments will be served.

Led by Jody Santos, Conservatory Manager
Members: $55; Non-members: $65
Advance registration is required here, beginning on Monday, October 16. Class sizes are limited; register early!

“A Plan Forward: Local Climate Action”
Panel Style Presentation by Manada Conservancy
Thursday, November 2 at 7 p.m.
Pennsylvania recently adopted a statewide “Climate Action Plan” to reduce emissions. What does that mean for local residents and townships? In this panel-style presentation, representatives will discuss the state’s climate action plan and how local townships can use research tools to create their own climate action plans. Panel includes Becky Wills, Derry Township Climate Change Advisory Committee, Brandi Robinson, Penn State University and Christopher Nafe, Energy Programs Office, PA Department of Environmental Protections. Free to attend. Please register by contacting Manada Conservancy at 717.566.4122 or via email at office@manada.org.

Eco-Fiction Book Group
Friday, November 10 from 10 – 11:30 a.m.
The Bear by Andrew Krivak
Join us! This book club group explores works of eco-fiction, which could be nature-oriented or environment-oriented (human impacts on nature). Participants are encouraged to read the book prior to the gathering to fully share in the discussion. Meetings will be held in the Garden Cottage. Light refreshments will be provided. Please call 717.508.5970 to register.

Rosie & Friends, Adventures of a Flower Truck Book Signing and Meet the Real Rosie!
Sunday, December 10 from 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
Rosie & Friends, Adventures of a Flower Truck by Jessica Maloy of Palmyra Greenhouse is a delightful story of an old truck and her transformation into a beautiful flower truck. Pose for pictures with Rosie, the Flower Truck. Copies of Rosie & Friends will be available for purchase and signing. To pre-purchase copies, click here.
For the Love of Orchids, Annual Orchid Show and Sale
Susquehanna Orchid Society
Member-Only Preview: Thursday, February 1, 2024 from 2 p.m. – 5 p.m.
Open to the Public: Friday, February 2 to Sunday, February 4, 2024 from 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.

The Susquehanna Orchid Society presents its 40th annual orchid show and sale in the Milton & Catherine Hershey Conservatory. More than 1,000 orchids representing dozens of varieties will be on display, including rare species and unique hybrids. Daily orchid show tours and informational sessions will take place in the exhibition and Garden Cottage. In addition, vendors will have orchids for sale; various orchid societies will have showy displays that will be judged onsite and presented with national awards. To see a schedule of events, starting in early January, please click here.

Fall Homeschool Day
For students Kindergarten through grade 6
Tuesday, October 3 from 9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
Botany is the scientific study of plant life from biological structures to how plants function. Take a deeper look into the anatomy of plants, their life cycles and how they benefit our ecosystem. Learn how pollinators rely on plant structures to do their job! Visit our guest, the Butterbee Foundation, to discover how bees convert nectar to honey and how other popular pollinators prepare for seasonal changes. Join the Susquehanna Bonsai Club to discover what processes take place when they remove a leaf or branch to create miniature versions of trees and shrubs. $11 per student, $13 per adult.
Pre-registration required here prior to October 1.

Penn State Extension Upcoming Events
The Penn State Extension Master Gardeners of Dauphin County has some exciting opportunities for you!

Walk & Talk with a Master Gardener
Soak in the beauty of our parks and demonstration gardens in the height of summer. See what’s blooming and learn about the plants and flowers.
This program is supported by Dauphin County Parks & Recreation and Highmark Blue Shield’s “Get Healthy” initiative.
October 13 from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m. at Wildwood Park.

Trees, Plants & Landscapes Photography Workshop
Learn the basics of photography and how to capture the beauty of nature in its purest form. This workshop will teach you everything you need to know about taking stunning photos.
September 30 from 8:00 to 10:00 a.m. at the Historic Harrisburg Cemetery.

2023 Speaker’s Series
Our last two talks of the year will feature an in-depth discussion about ferns, the ancient and often underused plants, and a deep-dive into gardening for wildlife, and how it can be both beautiful and functional. This program is in collaboration with Dauphin County’s Wildwood Park.
October 28 and November 8 from 9:30 to 11:00 a.m. at Olewine Nature Center (Wildwood Park).