

GROW-ZONE

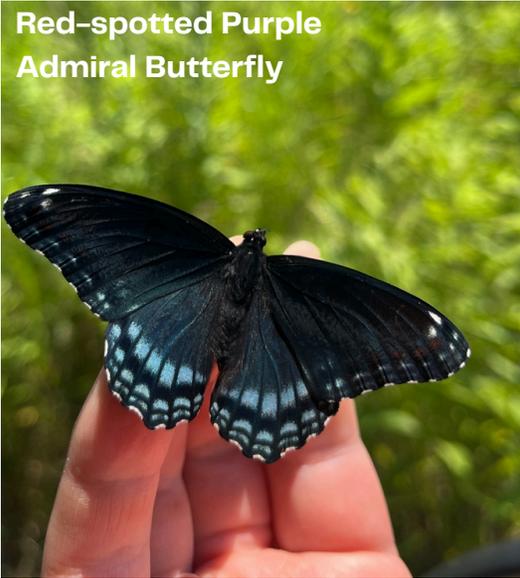
A Quarterly Journal Review of our Seasons

VOLUME 3 | ISSUE 4

AUGUST - OCTOBER 2025

Fluttering into Fall

Red-spotted Purple
Admiral Butterfly



Honeybee



Green-winged Cicada

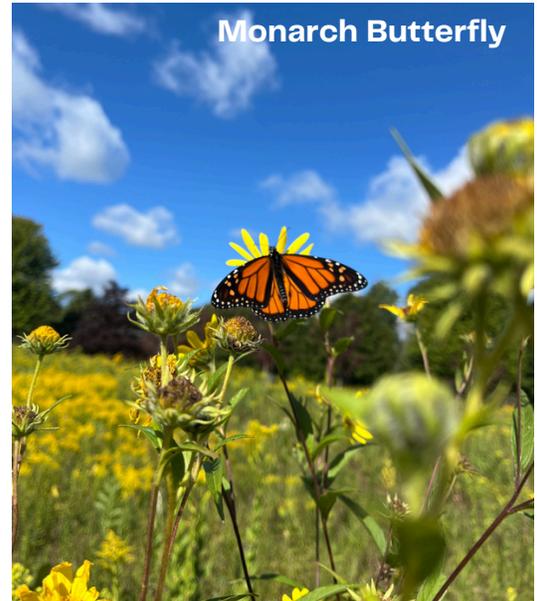
Though our lakeside prairie is known as a monarch waystation, we observe countless species of butterflies and other pollinating insects feeding on the flowers throughout the gardens. The summer foliage gives way to fall blooms, forcing these insects to shift their foraging behaviors. Some insects, like the bumblebee, begin to forage for protein-dense pollen to store up in their underground hideouts for winter. Others begin searching for high-calorie nectar as they make their way south along migration paths, like the monarch butterfly, who will travel up to 3,000 miles to their wintering grounds in Mexico. The gardens offer quite a diverse menu for a myriad of late summer and early fall foragers.

Tiger Swallowtail Butterfly



Bumblebee

Monarch Butterfly



Growing Minds

The season saw youngsters enjoying sunny days in our vegetable patches and along our garden paths. Camp Y-Koda sent a pack of 4K kiddos who were participating in a week-long “Little Dino” camp in August. Their visit to Jayrassic Park went over quite well! Then, in early September, a homeschool group arrived to reap what they had sown back in spring. This group of homeschooling parents arranges weekly field trips for their kids to get together, and they elected to participate in our “Planting & Harvesting” program. In spring, they planted beets, carrots and peppers in the Pumpkin Patch with fruit & vegetable expert, Rob Pragalz. They also planted pumpkins in our Pumpkin Hill garden, with direction from Mikki Heibing, our pumpkin gardening professional. By September 5th, all of their seeds had sprouted, grown tall, and produced their crops – it was time to harvest! The same students met back with both Rob and Mikki for direction on harvesting their spoils, and each family got to take a bag of produce and a pumpkin along home with them.



Adult Group Tours

Many clubs and organizations plan outings to the gardens for educational outings and team-building excursions. We happily hosted local groups like the Oostburg Christian elementary school faculty, Vista Care’s adult day service participants and Acuity, for their ‘100 Years Celebration’ event that they put on for their employees. Whatever the occasion, visiting groups appreciate the breath of fresh air and time to connect with peers that our garden tours offer!



Worship in the Gardens

The annual Luther Memorial Church Service had a record attendance this year of 280 guests! This is in-part due to their collaboration with two other local Lutheran parishes, the Grace Lutheran Church and St. Paul’s Lutheran Church. Worshippers enjoyed a beautiful sunny Sunday morning in the Amphitheater Garden and then had the opportunity to stroll the grounds. Families enjoyed fellowship time at the Conservatory and rode the Dairyland Express train.

Sheboygan Visual Artists

On August 16th, 350 guests bought tickets to attend the Sheboygan Visual Artist's "Plein Air: Art in the Gardens" annual fundraising event. Artists were spread out among the gardens to practice their craft, while guests had the opportunity to observe, and potentially purchase some artwork. Varying mediums like oil paint, acrylic, watercolor, sketch pads, sidewalk chalk, poetry, music and even chainsaw carving could be found along the garden paths that day. Following the event, all artists had the opportunity to showcase their garden creations at Uptown Social in the SVA's gallery held there.



Delta Theta Phi Gathering

In September, brothers of Valparaiso University's Delta Theta Phi fraternity gathered here in the gardens for a long-awaited reunion. These gentlemen and their spouses enjoyed reminiscing on memories from their days at university. They also enjoyed making new memories together again, while they enjoyed lunch and guided garden tours at the farm. They then met for a delightful dinner at Sheboygan's Yacht Club.



Scarecrow Festival



The 5th annual Scarecrow Festival was a great success! 1500 guests attended this fundraiser for the Sheboygan County YMCA's Camp Y-Koda. Guests enjoyed family-friendly activities like fishing, face painting, train rides, and voting on their favorite scarecrow. A record 47 scarecrows were on display from local businesses, non-profits, and individuals.



Large Business Popular Vote Winner:
Quasius Construction Co.
"Chicken Jockey"



The wine grapes (above) were harvested and turned into wine by the Spaeth family, who also collaborated with 3 Sheeps Brewing Co. to make a unique beer/wine beverage.

“Where does all the produce go?”



Our crops are not grown for profit. Instead, some of the fruits and vegetables that we grow in our gardens get preserved in our canning kitchen. (See Below) Our owner also generously allows garden staff to take home some of the produce from time to time – talk about work perks!



Many of the vegetables, like the artichokes and potatoes pictured above, are donated to the Fresh Meals on Wheels of Sheboygan County to be used in their daily delivery meal services.



Some of the honey (left) that is harvested is used in some of the following year’s canning recipes, in place of granulated sugar. A good amount is also squared away for Christmas gifts for Mr. Christopher’s family. The honey that remains by the following spring will be divided up for our neighbor gift baskets – it’s pretty sweet to be a neighbor to the farm!



Pumpkins, squashes and gourds...oh my! We grow our own pie pumpkins to make pies with, and we also grow a vast variety of squashes and gourds. Many of these are used as decor for the Scarecrow Festival.



We weighed our giant pumpkins – see above. This year’s record was a whopping 167 pounds!



The new barn that was built on the west side of the property has been named the “Haven Barn” for its proximity to the local community of Haven, WI. This barn was built to accommodate the need for more storage space, especially for large equipment and some of the farm’s outdoor supplies that need shelter during the winter months. A stone swale system was designed to wrap around the barn to account for increased rain runoff from the roof. There have been many new tree plantings dug in this fall, to further aid in soaking up excess rainfall and to help slow any erosion that may occur around the barn.



2025/08/06



2025/10/27



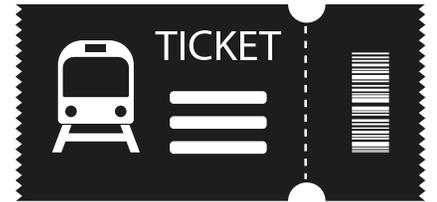
2025/09/15



2025/10/01

Transportation Museum Addition

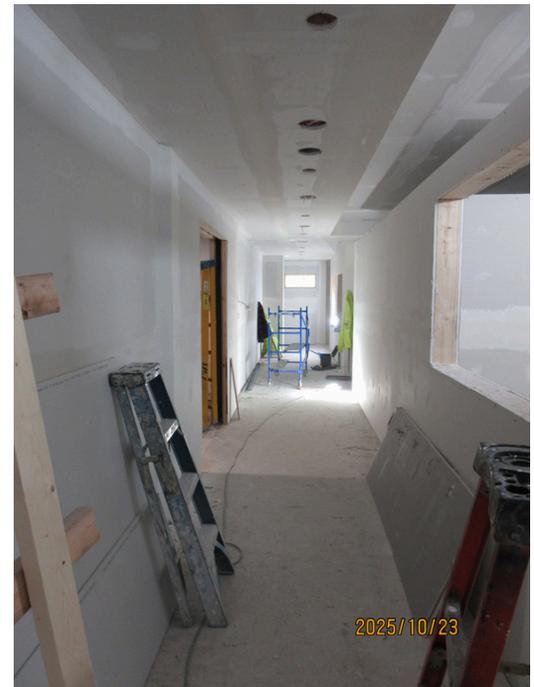
This unique new addition to the museum will give visitors a look into the past - an opportunity to feel what it was like to ride the rails during the passenger train era! The dining car, ticketing booth, and passenger car rooms are really beginning to take shape, with drywall, lighting and the steps to the lower level being finished. Outdoors, grass sod is being rolled out and watered, along with trees and shrubs to frame the new part of the building. This winter we will begin to decorate with visual elements of this historical time period.



2025/10/23



2025/09/27



2025/10/23

Phenology - “the study of cyclic and seasonal natural phenomena, especially in relation to climate and plant and animal life.”

Date: August 11, 2025

High Temp: 84; Sunny/Rainy

Notes: The first red hibiscus plant is blooming near the Amphitheater; morning glory vines have reached the top of the arched trellises in the Pumpkin Patch Garden



Date: September 10, 2025

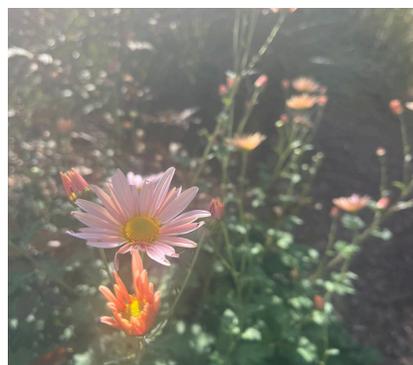
High Temp: 67; Sunny

Notes: 3.5 gallons of honey were harvested today; stiff-leaved golden rod is beginning to bloom in the prairie; 14 monarchs were seen grouping in the prairie - migrators!

Date: September 30, 2025

High Temp: 71; Sunny

Notes: The first woolly bear caterpillar is seen on a path; dozens of goldfinches are pecking at the sawtooth sunflower seeds in the prairie



Date: October 11, 2025

High Temp: 65; Sunny

Notes: A huge shaggy mane mushroom is found in the Children's Farm; the dendranthemums have started blooming near the Perch Pond