Welcome from the Garden Curator

As I reflect on 2020, I have seen a silver lining in this COVID cloud. Prior to the Garden opening in late May, it was obvious that many people were looking to the outdoors for something to do. It was heartening to see our parks and forest preserves so alive with people getting in touch with the outdoors and experiencing nature firsthand. In the past, I have often been puzzled why our region’s amazing outdoor recreational opportunities often go underutilized. I hope this outdoor engagement is a trend that continues to grow.

When we finally opened the Garden, it was marvelous to see so many guests enjoying the outdoors, often for their first trek into public spaces since the pandemic began. We know that a well-prepared garden offers our guests an opportunity to reengage their human senses in a time when we are often overwhelmed by the cacophony of social media, news cycles, and unusually busy calendars. We are thankful for the support we have received from our community as we seek to connect people with nature via the Japanese garden, and further offer an opportunity for fresh insight and clear thought.

I am reminded of the words of the Garden’s designer, Hoichi Kurisu:

To experience Anderson Gardens is to allow thought new space: to relax, imagine, to open and to see... a single rock arrangement by the pond...the hush of breeze filtering through the pines...tender new leaves unfolding on a lace-leaf maple...the sounds of trickling water drawing one deeper into exploration around the bend. Peace.

There is tremendous grace and energy inherent in such ancient rhythms. At once calming and exuberant, the natural elements remind one of how it is possible to feel, to breathe, to live with inspiration – hastening the rediscovery of a self in harmony with a world not chaotic and destructive, but full of regenerative potential. My hope is that visitors to the gardens will experience this tremendous innate power.

Hoichi’s words are timeless, as is our connection with nature. We look forward to seeing you in the Garden in the Spring!

Tim Gruner
Head of Horticulture & Garden Curator
Looking Back at the 2020 Garden Season

Anderson Japanese Gardens’ mission and programming is centered around family, friends, and community. Though our mission is consistent, each season is unique. The year 2020 was different for a reason we could not have predicted. The COVID-19 pandemic broke the rhythm of the Gardens’ varied and dynamic program offering. While disappointed that we were not able to deliver first-class events and create memories as we are accustomed to, we are grateful the Garden itself was open for all to enjoy.

Operating Highlights

- The Garden opened on May 29, nearly a month later than normal, due to COVID related restrictions.
- All community events and most programs were canceled for the entire year.
- Advance online reservations were successfully implemented as a way to control daily guest visits.
- Revenue from Gift Shop purchases, Weddings & Events, Sponsorship, Membership, and Facility Usage were adversely impacted and considerably lower than the previous years.
- Once the State of Illinois moved to Phase Four of its COVID mitigation plan at the end of June, the Garden attendance set a monthly record in August and near records the remainder of the season.
- The Garden retained a core of dedicated and engaged docents despite health concerns related to COVID-19.
- Fresco’s daily food service was suspended in late March in accordance with state and local regulations. Daily restaurant service resumed at the end of May but was suspended again in mid-November in accordance with COVID related restrictions.

Fund Development Highlights

- Twenty-two sponsors redesignated all or a portion of their sponsorship commitments allowing the Garden to utilize their financial support for general operating purposes.
- Capital Project fundraising started the year strong but came to a halt in early March. The Garden received over $65,000 in capital project support in the first quarter.
- The Garden increased its number of Annual Fund Donors and eclipsed the $100,000 mark for the first time.

Garden Improvements

- Phase II of the concrete walkway conversion was completed in the Spring. The cost for the Walkways for Everyone capital improvement project was $180,000 and was 100% donor funded.
- The Pollinator Garden was completely removed and replanted in the Spring. The cost of the restoration was $6,000, which was 100% donor funded.
Thank You for Supporting AJG’s Vision
2020 Annual Fund & Capital Project Donors

The above donors contributed $50 or more over the course of the year.
Looking Ahead to the 2021 Garden Season

We believe the Garden itself will be open for daily visitors but are not certain it will be able to produce a comprehensive calendar of community events. Instead of planning events with so many unknown variables, we are focusing on expanding Garden capacity and delivering a new Health & Wellness initiative.

Operational Objectives
- Expand capacity so more people are able to benefit from and enjoy the Garden.
- Deliver high-quality individual visitor experiences to make their Garden visit more memorable.
- Eliminate all events except Tuesday Evening in the Gardens and a reimagined Japanese Summer Festival, knowing future precautionary measures may force us to modify or cancel these events.
- Shift programing focus from Community Events to Health & Wellness initiatives.

Fundraising Objectives
- Broaden our base of Annual Fund & Capital Improvement Project donors.
- Secure at least $150,000 in Annual Fund contributions and $200,000 in Capital Improvement contributions.

Capital Improvement Objectives
- South Gate Restoration; Late April/Early May ($25,000)
- Additional phase for the Concrete Pathway Conversion; Early-to-Late April ($35,000)
- Indoor Equipment Storage Facility ($85,000)
- Giboshi Bridge Railings; Fall 2021/Spring 2022 Installation ($165,000)

Board of Directors

Tom Furst  Board Chair  The Furst Group
Duane Wingate  Ingenium Technologies  Principal

Frederick Kapala  Honorable Judge  United States Federal Judge
Philip Eaton  Rosecrance Health Network  CEO, Retired

Richard Behr  Joseph Behr & Sons  Retired Chairman
John Anderson  Anderson Japanese Gardens  Founder

David Anderson  Anderson Japanese Gardens  Founding Family Member
Mission

In our hectic and stressful world, Anderson Japanese Gardens opens minds to a different culture while offering guests a place of peace and tranquility where they will find healing, renewal, inspiration and a reenergized soul.

Vision

Anderson Japanese Gardens is a world-class Japanese garden that provides a sanctuary for the purpose of relational connectivity and community. We do this by:

- Providing an uplifting and inspirational outdoor setting.
- Leveraging the power of nature and culture for the purpose of bringing people together to build community.
- Developing & delivering first-class programming that creates enriching experiences for people of all ages.
- Functioning as an experiential classroom for life-long learning.

Special Recognition

Anderson Japanese Gardens is grateful for all our community partners. Our 2020 sponsors deserve special recognition for redesignating all or a portion of their sponsorship commitments, enabling the Garden to utilize their support for general operating purposes. These contributions helped the Garden navigate an incredibly challenging year.

Contributions Are Tax Deductible: Anderson Japanese Gardens is an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. We rely on contributions from individuals, corporations and foundations to cover approximately one-third of our annual operating costs. Contributions are tax deductible to the extent of the law.
Time spent in nature is the most cost-effective and powerful way to counteract the burnout and sort of depression that we feel when we sit in front of a computer all day.

-Richard Louv

2020 SEASON IN REVIEW