



The Path Ahead

Spring 2026

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Connect to What Matters Most

Anderson Japanese Gardens is much more than a stunning, tranquil escape. It is an integral part of the region's social and economic fabric, enriching the quality of life for those who live here and for those who visit.

From intimate, year-round programming to large-scale community events, the Garden is a place where friends meet, visitors explore, and everyone can share the joy of being outdoors. The Garden nurtures wellness, inspiring body and mind, with the vibrant programming that encourages curiosity and engagement.

Anderson Japanese Gardens is also central to the vitality of the Rockford area. A strong cultural core makes our region more attractive to talented professionals, skilled workers, and families seeking a better quality of life. The Garden fosters connection, sparks civic pride, and helps ensure that Rockford is a community where people want to live, work, and stay.

By supporting Anderson Japanese Gardens, you are investing in more than a garden. You are investing in community. Your generosity sustains the programs, events, and natural spaces that bring people together, create lasting memories, and enhance the well-being of all who visit.



Join us in keeping Anderson Japanese Gardens a vibrant, welcoming space for everyone. Together, we can strengthen our region's cultural heart, enrich lives, and build a community that thrives.

John Gleason
Chief Operating Officer

TUESDAY EVENING IN THE GARDENS

Creating Community through Music



Bringing Music, Nature, and Community Together

Tuesday Evening in the Gardens is a beloved summer tradition that brings the community together through music, nature, and shared experiences. Gathering in this beautiful setting each week fosters connection, enriches the cultural life of our region, and contributes to the vibrant sense of place that makes our community special.

Announcing the 2026 Tuesday Evening in the Gardens Concert Schedule:

May 26	July 14
Emily Nenni (Nashville, TN) – Country/Soul Opening: Kelly Steward (Rockford, IL) – Americana/Folk	LOVE with Johnny Echols (Los Angeles, CA) – Rock & Roll Opening: Emily Hurd (Rockford, IL) – Singer-songwriter
June 2	July 21
Dueling Pianos w/ Anthony Sanders (Chicago, IL) – Popular Covers Opening: Rock & Roll Institute (Rockford, IL) – Rock & Roll	The Cactus Blossoms (Minneapolis, MN) – Rock/Country Opening: Emilio Salinas (Rockford, IL) – Singer-songwriter
June 9	July 28
Too Deep (Rockford, IL) – Funk/Soul Opening: The Danhattans (Rockford, IL) – Jazz	Strange Americans (Denver, CO) – Rock Opening: Dan Maguire (Rockford, IL) Singer-songwriter
June 16	August 4
Steph Strings (Melbourne, Australia) – Singer-songwriter Opening: Orihana (Chicago, IL) – Popular Covers	Danielle Nicole Band (Nashville, TN) – Blues/Rock Opening: Cash Box Kings (Chicago, IL) – Blues/Rock
June 23	August 11
Alysha Brilla (Brampton, Ontario) – Folk/Soul Opening: RYA (Nashville, TN) – Singer-songwriter	The Watson Twins (Nashville, TN) – Country Opening: Swingbilly RFD (Rockford, IL) – Bluegrass
June 30	August 18
Miles Nielsen & the Rusted Hearts (Rockford, IL) – Rock Opening: 40 North (Rockford, IL) – Popular Covers	Deep Blue Something (Denton, TX) – Rock Opening: Josh Caterer (Chicago, IL) – Rock
July 7	August 25
Howie Day (Brewer, ME) – Singer-songwriter Opening: Eli Parker (Rockford, IL) – Singer-songwriter	Them Coulee Boys (Eau Claire, WI) – Bluegrass Opening: Rollin' Whiskey (Rockford, IL) – Country Covers

Every Tuesday Evening

Opening Act at **5:45 PM** | Headliner at **6:45 PM**

Presenting Sponsor:



Fueling a Vibrant Region | Thank You To Our Sponsors

Anderson Japanese Gardens is more than a serene destination — it's a vital part of our region's social and cultural fabric, enriching life for residents and visitors alike. Through community events and year-round programming, the Garden fosters connection, inspires civic pride, and helps make the Rockford area a vibrant place to live, work, and stay. This cultural vitality attracts and retains talented professionals, fueling business growth and economic strength.

Supporting Anderson Japanese Gardens means investing in a stronger future for our community. Join us in making Rockford a thriving place to live, work, and play.



Promotional & Cultural Partners





GARDEN EXPLORERS

Where Children Discover the World

Thursday Mornings | 9am | Complimentary Garden Admission

Sparking Curiosity through Connection and Exploration. Garden Explorers fosters meaningful connections between children, parents, and caregivers by inspiring them to explore the world together. We invite recognizable community figures to share lively, personality-filled story time that spark imagination and create shared moments of joy.

Interactive activities led by organizations deepen engagement, encourage hands-on discovery, and strengthen community ties. Ultimately, Garden Explorers inspires families to slow down, connect with one another, and continue their exploration together in the Garden.

Date	Story Time Readers	Interactive Activities
June 11	Joe Sosnowski; Illinois State Representative, District 69	Kantorei, Rockford's Premier, Coeducational Youth Choir
June 18	David Vella; Illinois State Representative, District 68	The Wonderland Ballet Company
June 25	Aaron Wilson; Morning Weather Anchor, WIFR Channel 23	The Golden Apple Foundation
July 2	Mayor Tom McNamara; Mayor, City of Rockford	"Hoo" Haven Wildlife Rehabilitation Center
July 9	John Gleason; COO, Anderson Japanese Gardens	Wendy & DB, Award-Winning Multi-Cultural Kindie Duo
July 16	Zach Meiborg; CEO, Meiborg Trucking & Meiborg Companies	Todd Downing, Tall Tales & Silly Songs
July 23	The GoRockford Team	GoRockford Team: Stroll on State
July 30	Caitlin Pusateri; COO, Greater Rockford Chamber of Commerce	TnZ Magic, Zack Percell
August 6	Brent Murray; Owner/Operator, Dairyhaus Homemade Ice Cream	ScribbleMonster, Creative Music Play
August 13	Ann Wasser; Executive Director, Severson Dells Nature Center	Discovery Center Museum

Presenting Sponsor: 



JAPANESE SUMMER FESTIVAL

A Celebration of Traditional Cultural Arts

Saturday, July 18 & Sunday, July 19

Broadening Appreciation for the Rich Heritage of Japanese Culture. The Japanese Summer Festival preserves and promotes Japan's traditional cultural arts by creating immersive, accessible experiences that inspire appreciation across generations. The Festival's format repeats headline performances and tea ceremonies throughout the day to ensure most guests can meaningfully engage with these traditions.

The Japanese Summer Festival strengthens cultural awareness and community connection year after year. The two-day festival welcomes guests of all ages and draws more than 3,000 attendees.

Presenting Sponsor: **kikkoman**[®]

Monthly Lecture Series

The Monthly Lecture Series is held on the third Thursday of the month, from April through November and features local, regional, and national experts who discuss the history, cultural significance, and design of Japanese gardens, as well as broader topics in horticulture and Japanese art and history. Visit our website for the full schedule.

Upcoming Lectures:

Date	Speaker
April 16	Roy Diblik Perennial Garden Designer and Author of <i>The Know Maintenance Perennial Garden</i>
May 21	Janie Grillo Nature/Forest Therapy Guide
June 18	Sadafumi Uchiyama Curator Emeritus of Portland Japanese Garden and Design Consultant for Anderson Japanese Gardens

Become A Member

Experience the beauty and calm of Anderson Japanese Gardens while helping preserve a space that enriches the entire Rockford region. Your membership supports the Garden's excellence and ensures ongoing access to the moments and experiences you love.

Join or renew your membership and enjoy the many benefits of supporting this remarkable place.

Online:

www.andersongardens.org

In-person:

The Visitor Center

Call:

815-229-9390



Moments of Calm Thanks to Our Generous Donors



Anderson Japanese Gardens continues to grow as a place of beauty, reflection, and connection. Recent enhancements to the Garden of Reflection are bringing new life to a previously underutilized space along the south bank of Spring Creek. This thoughtfully designed area now features a serene seating space, elegant stonework, a graceful bridge, and a winding path beneath a canopy of towering trees. The gentle sound of flowing water completes the experience, creating a quiet retreat set apart from the Garden's main pathways.

Whether shared with a small group or enjoyed in solitude, this peaceful setting offers guests a place to pause, reflect, and reconnect—an enduring testament to the impact of your support.

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 fund approximately one-third of the Gardens' annual operating costs and a significant portion of capital improvement costs. Contributions are tax deductible to the extent of the law.

Help Us Preserve A Garden Treasure

Nestled between the Pond Strolling Garden and the South Gate lies a tranquil garden sheltered under the cooling canopy of 150-year-old oak trees. Sunlight filters through the leaves, dancing across the gentle ripples of a meandering stream that winds its way to a quiet pool. Crushed stone paths invite visitors to stroll along either bank while the soft murmur of flowing water offers a pause from the world beyond the garden gates.

For more than forty years, this serene space has offered visitors a place to slow down, breathe, and reconnect with nature. Now, the time has come for the stream and the wooden bridge to undergo a careful restoration. Guided by our philosophy of respectful restoration, every element – from the worn bridge to the boulders lining the banks – will be renewed with precision and care, preserving the beauty and craftsmanship of the original design.

The project, planned for Fall 2026, will include rebuilding the wooden bridge, installing a durable concrete liner for the stream, resetting boulders, and replanting the stream edges. The total cost of this restoration is just over \$75,000 – a meaningful investment in the Garden's future.

With your support, this tranquil haven will continue to offer moments of peace, wonder, and connection with nature and ensure the Garden's beauty and tranquility can be enjoyed by visitors for years to come.



Celebrate Love at the Garden

Weddings at Anderson Japanese Gardens are a celebration of love set within the natural beauty of the Garden. From intimate ceremonies to elegant receptions, each gathering is thoughtfully designed to honor the landscape while creating a serene, unforgettable experience.

The reception space in the Visitors Center extends the magic of the Garden indoors. Warm timber accents, expansive windows, and outdoor decks create a refined and inviting space for dining, dancing, and enjoying the evening. Paired with the exceptional cuisine of Franchesco's Ristorante with Fresco at the Gardens, it is the perfect space to continue the celebration.

For couples seeking a truly memorable setting, the Garden offers a timeless and inspiring backdrop.

Now Accepting 2027 & 2028 Wedding Bookings.
Please contact weddings@andersongardens.org
for more information and to schedule a tour.

New Horticultural Leadership

After 35 years of extraordinary service, Anderson Japanese Gardens will celebrate the retirement of Head of Horticulture and Garden Curator Tim Gruner in May 2026. For the past 25 years in this leadership role, Tim has helped shape the Garden into the world-class destination it is today – guiding its growth, preserving its authenticity, and elevating its beauty for generations to enjoy.

In preparation for Tim's retirement, the Garden welcomed Nick Esthus in August 2024 as the Garden Grounds & Facilities Manager to ensure a seamless transition and to uphold the Garden's exceptional standards. Nick brings deep expertise in Japanese garden design and care, with previous leadership roles at the Fort Worth Botanic Garden and Memphis Botanic Garden.

Tim's impact on Anderson Japanese Gardens is immeasurable, and his legacy will continue to inspire all who visit.





ANDERSON JAPANESE GARDENS



MAKE FRESCO PART OF YOUR GARDEN EXPERIENCE

Begin or end your Garden visit with an exceptional dining experience at Fresco. Serving breakfast and lunch, Fresco offers a thoughtfully curated menu complemented by tranquil Garden views – an elegant choice for leisurely mornings, relaxed lunches, and impressing clients.

Fresco is open daily at 8:00 am. For reservations, please call 815.316.3388.

HOST YOUR PRIVATE EVENT AT THE GARDEN

Make your next celebration unforgettable at Anderson Japanese Gardens. From intimate gatherings to festive holiday parties, the Garden offers a beautiful setting unlike any other.

For more information, please contact us at events@andersongardens.org or 815-316-3285.

VOLUNTEER WITH US

Share your passion for the outdoors and Japanese culture as a volunteer at Anderson Japanese Gardens. Volunteers serve as docents, visitor center greeters, garden and office volunteers, and more. If you would like to help visitors connect more deeply with the Garden's history, design, and philosophy, we would love to have you as a volunteer.

Learn more or contact us at tours@andersongardens.org or 815.316.3354.

GARDEN HOURS

Monday – Friday 9:00 am – 6:00 pm

Saturday & Sunday 9:00 am – 5:00 pm