ANDERSON JAPANESE GARDENS

Fall/Winter Programs & Activities

2026-27



- Path of Pumpkins
- Spooktacular
- Illuminated
- Fireside Music Series



SPOOKTACULAR

A Magical & Whimsical Halloween Adventure

Creating Boo-tiful Memories for the Entire Family

Anderson Japanese Gardens transforms into a playful Halloween adventure during Spooktacular, creating a fun and festive experience for the entire family. Costumes, trick-or-treating, hands-on activities, and a few delightful surprises invite families to explore, imagine, and make lasting memories while experiencing the Garden in an entirely new way.

Presented in partnership with Hoo-Haven Wildlife Rehabilitation & Education Center, Spooktacular brings families together for an afternoon filled with discovery, laughter, and just the right amount of spooky fun.

See the Spooky Fun Come to Life.
Take a peek at the fun, costumes, and surprises Spooktacular a Garden favorite.

Click Here To Learn More

Saturday, October 24, 2026 | 1:00 – 4:00 PM

Free for All Garden Members | Cost of Regular Garden Admission for Non-Members

Sponsors: MembersAlliance Credit Union · i3 Broadband Here for you · Costco Wholesale · "Hoo" Haven Wildlife Rehabilitation & Education Center · Dolphin Swim Club

Carving Out Creativity and Community

Path of Pumpkins brings a playful touch of Halloween to Anderson Japanese Gardens, transforming the Garden into an outdoor showcase of creativity from students across the region. Middle and high school students put their imaginations and carving skills to work, creating displays of jack-o'-lanterns for guests to discover as they explore the Garden.

More than a festive fall experience, Path of Pumpkins connects students, schools and the community through creativity and a little friendly competition. Guests can vote for their favorite displays, with the top three schools receiving cash prizes – making every walk along the path a chance to celebrate young artists and support local schools.

Who's on the Path?
See which local schools are putting their creativity on display. Check back as new schools join the fun!

Click Here To Learn More

Voting: October 17 - 24, 2026* | Regular Hours

Free for All Garden Members | Cost of Regular Garden Admission for Non-Members



*Winners announced on October 26, 2026 via Social Media.

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.

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ILLUMINATED

A Serene & Enchanting Winter Lights Experience

Bringing Light, Wonder, and Connection to Winter.

Illuminated transforms Anderson Japanese Gardens into an enchanting winter experience, inviting guests to see the Garden from an entirely new perspective. Dramatic uplighting and thousands of lights woven throughout the landscape create moments of wonder, discovery, and connection around every turn.

More than a seasonal tradition, Illuminated brings families and friends together during a special time of year, creating shared memories while celebrating the beauty of the Garden and the magic of winter.

December 3 –13
Thursdays – Sundays | 5:00 – 8:30 PM

December 17 – January 3
Open Every Night | 5:00 – 8:30 PM

Closed Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, New Year's Eve, New Year's Day.

General Admission Rates:
Non-Member: Adult $15 | Senior $14 | Student & Military $13 | Five & Under FREE
Basic Member: $8 | Premium Member: FREE

Admission is only purchased in person at the admissions counter within the visitors center the evening of your visit.

Date	Performances
Friday, December 4	**6:00 PM** | Guilford High School **7:00 PM** | Voices of Harlem
Saturday, December 5	**6:00 PM** | Rockford Lutheran **7:00 PM** | Christian Life Schools
Thursday, December 10	**6:00 PM** | Marquette Elementary School **7:00 PM** | To Be Determined
Friday, December 11	**6:00 PM** | Belvidere North **7:00 PM** | Kantorei
Saturday, December 12	**6:00 PM** | Whitehead Elementary **7:00 PM** | Keith Country Day School
Friday, December 18	**6:00 PM** | UIC College of Medicine Ultrasounds **7:00 PM** | Kinnikinnick Bell Choir

Sundays, December 6, 13, & 20
6:15 PM & 7:15 PM

Fireside reading of "The Night Before Christmas" with John Gleason

Sponsors: MembersAlliance Credit Union "You can rely on us!" | i3 Broadband Here for you



FIRESIDE MUSIC SERIES

Embracing the Cozy Charm of Winter

Finding Warmth and Connection Through Music.

The Fireside Music Series offers a welcoming winter retreat where guests can slow down, gather with friends, and enjoy the warmth of live music in the peaceful setting of Anderson Japanese Gardens. Performances by local and Rockford Symphony Orchestra musicians create an intimate experience that brings music, community, and connection together during the coldest months of the year.

With light lunches, coffee, tea, and pastries available from Meg's Daily Grind, the Fireside Music Series gives guests a reason to gather, linger, and enjoy a cozy escape from the winter chill.

Performance Schedule Will Be Announced Soon.

Visit the Fireside Music Series page for updates:

Click Here To Learn More

Wednesdays - Saturdays, January 13 - March 12
11:00 AM to 3:00 PM

Enjoy light lunches, coffees, teas, and irresistibile pastries for purchase from **Meg's Daily Grind.**

There is no entry fee.

Sponsor: First Midwest Group

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Voices from the Garden: Monthly Lecture Series



Each month, Anderson Japanese Gardens invites guests to deepen their connection to Japanese art, culture, and the natural world through its Monthly Lecture Series. Scholars, artists, and Garden staff offer an evening of insight into the traditions that shape the Garden experience. In November, join us for the final lecture of the 2026 season, closing out a year of rich discussion before the series returns in the spring.

Lectures are held in the Garden's Visitors Center. Members attend free; non-members, $5. Space is limited, and pre-registration is required.



Thursday, November 19 | 7:00 PM

A Year in Review — Nick Esthus, Garden Grounds & Facilities Manager

Join Nick Esthus for an insider's look at the past twelve months at Anderson Japanese Gardens, from the routine to the remarkable — the weather patterns, special projects, and quiet moments that shape the Garden through every season.

Click Here To Learn More



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.

Experience Autumn at Anderson Japanese Gardens

There's still time to enjoy the beauty of the season at Anderson Japanese Gardens. Stroll the peaceful paths, take in the changing colors, and experience the Garden before it closes for regular admission on Sunday, November 8.

While special events will continue throughout the fall and winter, November 8 marks the final day to visit and walk through the Garden during the 2026 season.

Fall Hours
Open Daily | 9:00 AM–5:00 PM
November 2–8 | 9:00 AM–4:30 PM



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.

Featured wedding photography by Christopher Tyson.

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**.

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