

GROW-ZONE

A Quarterly Journal Review of our Seasons

VOLUME 4 | ISSUE 3

MAY - JULY 2026



New Growth

Pictured here on the left, a dwarf Redbud tree along our Lake Michigan walking path blooms in the month of May. Redbuds have striking pink flowers that bloom before any leaves appear, creating a dramatic contrast against bare branches. The flowers attract bees, butterflies, hummingbirds, and songbirds. Seeds are eaten by native bird species like northern bobwhites and chickadees. Indigenous peoples historically used parts of the tree for treating coughs and fevers.

Visiting the gardens in spring and summer will satisfy anyone's fascination for flowers! An abundance of yellow is seen throughout the month of May with the forsythia shrubs and many varieties of daffodils that are blooming, like these on the right. Though daffodils reach their peak bloom in April in most parts of Wisconsin, we've noticed the cooler lake effect delays their bloom period a bit, causing a dazzling performance that extends into the month of May.





Out with the Old; In with the New



Once the spring tulips are spent, our garden staff recycle those beds with fresh annuals, as seen here near the main entrance and Farm House. Begonias and coleus are a few popular picks for these annual beds.



Several areas of the gardens were revamped this year, like this section on the backside of the Humming Curves golf hole. There was no shortage of new shrubs and trees for Mr. Christopher to choose from to “spruce” it up!

Our prairie management protocol calls for burning our existing wildflower and tallgrass prairies every 2-3 years, either in spring or fall. We conduct prescribed burns in sections, leaving portions of the prairie unburned to provide continuous habitat and support diverse insect populations. Prairie burning helps knock back invasive grasses so that native species can flourish.



Field Trips at the Christopher Farm & Gardens



Field trips in the gardens are always a blast! From the “Pollen Collector” relay game, to planting pumpkin seeds, sketching wildlife in the meadow for our Jr. Naturalist program, or building a “bee hotel” to support our pollinators, there is something for every type of young learner to enjoy here in the gardens.



We've gone mobile! We can also bring our programs to the students. On a few occasions, we've brought our bees and props to school functions.

Maintenance Projects in the Gardens

With about 60 acres of botanical gardens to maintain, annual updating projects are a must. Several areas of the gardens received tune-ups this spring and summer. We're very fortunate to have skilled staff members that can handle these tough jobs when the time comes. And, when we need a little help, we've got a great list of local contractors that can lend a hand for the biggest jobs.



New sections of asphalt were paved in several of the main intersections and garden pathways to address years of use and freezing and thawing. The paths are so smooth now!

Before the new asphalt projects began, necessary maintenance was completed along the main pathways, leaving some areas of the gardens temporarily disrupted.



You simply cannot have a summer season without some storm damage - tree work, now can you? Throw in a new swale system over by Pumpkin Hill, and our staff had their work cut out for them this year!



National Cancer Survivor's Day

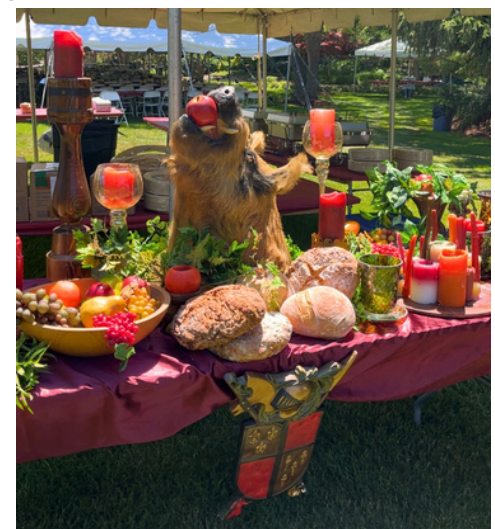


Members of the Sheboygan County Cancer Care Fund and their families enjoyed a beautiful day in the gardens celebrating their survivorship on Sunday, June 7th. Speakers included SCCCF Vice President Tim Renzelmann, Internal Medicine & Oncology Specialist & President Dr. Mark Battag, Executive Director of CFG Erika Lusthoff, and cancer survivors, like Jane Berg, Deborah Pilzing & Diane Knop, who graciously shared their stories and comments. The group also had tours of the gardens that led them to the new "Secret Garden," a new area, inspired by one family's donation of the "Secret Garden" arch and their journey with cancer. The "Survive, Thrive & Be Fit" subgroup of the SCCCF visited several other times throughout the year. One well attended visit featured our Director of Operations, George Quiriconi, who shared an overview of our canning and produce preservation methods.



June-A-Palooza - A Knight at the Round Table

The annual themed fundraiser hosted by the Christopher Farm & Garden for Fresh Meals on Wheels of Sheboygan County was a success! 352 guests enjoyed the medieval motifs, which included drinking potions, eating turkey legs, and slaying a dragon!



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

Date: May 13, 2026

High Temp: 58; Sunny

Notes: Spring beauties are seen in the Bear Woods; spirea shrubs are blooming; a hummingbird was spotted; lilacs are beginning to bloom



Date: June 11, 2026

High Temp: 79; Sunny/Rainy

Notes: The first daylily has bloomed near the Humming Curves golf hole; waterlilies are beginning to bloom in the ponds



Date: June 25, 2026

High Temp: 70; Partly Cloudy

Notes: The first purple coneflower is in bloom in the Farm House Prairie; a hive of honeybees was successfully split with 4 new queen cells visible



Date: June 13, 2026

High Temp: 88; Sunny

Notes: A sun halo formed in the sky; bee balm monarda is beginning to bloom in the Farm House Prairie; a few Canadian golden rod are blooming; the first compass flowers are blooming