students get hands-on learning in the Nature Academy

Inside: Paving the Way for a Hiking & Biking Trail • Medicinal Garden Opening • Happy 15, Shakespeare • Azalea Bonsai Display • Students Garner Prizes • Getting Strategic • and more
A non-motorized trail will provide an alternative to taking the car for 100 student groups, 350 students, 38 U-M groups logging over 3,250 volunteers hours at the Campus Farm, and the 140,000 people who visit Matthaei Botanical Gardens each year.

In March the trail took a huge step forward: the Township and U-M received word of a conditional commitment of $1.2 million in MDOT’s Transportation Alternative Funds toward the $2.5 million total project cost. This, on top of the $250,000 already committed by Washtenaw County Parks and Rec, $50,000 from our corporate neighbor National Sanitation Foundation, $100,000 from Matthaei-Nichols, $50,000 from Ann Arbor Township, and $300,000 in other outstanding requests, have put the trail within reach.

Moran is already looking to the future. “I hope to continue the U-M-Ann Arbor Township partnership to build a trail from Matthaei to Plymouth Road once the Geddes to Matthaei portion is complete,” says Moran.

The finished trail will be bigger than the sum of its parts, delivering multiple benefits to the community and to the Botanical Gardens. Safe travel is just one of those benefits. The stretch of Dixboro Road between Parker Mill County Park and Matthaei Botanical Gardens is no walk—or bike ride—in the park. Shouldersless, pitted, and traffic-laden, Dixboro Road from Parker Mill to the Gardens is unpleasant and downright dangerous for bicyclists and walkers. When finished the path will wind its way through a green quilt quite off the beaten path of Dixboro, inviting walkers and bicyclists to enjoy otherwise inaccessible ecosystems. From the trail, travelers will see quiet forests, rolling hills, and wildlife such as butterflies and birds. The trail also aligns with one of our priorities: creating non-motorized transportation connecting U-M’s central and north campuses to Matthaei.

Help Us Close the Funding Gap

We are close, very close, to making the dream of a hiking and biking trail connecting Matthaei with points in Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti, and beyond a reality. Now we’re reaching out to individuals, Matthaei-Nichols members, businesses, and corporations to bridge the gap between the funding in place and the amount needed to go ahead with trail construction.

The funding gap is about $550,000 if outstanding applications come through. To close that gap we’ll be turning to you. The goal is to raise the remaining funds by December 2015 to allow construction to begin in the summer of 2016. We hope you’ll join us in raising the $550,000 needed to make this trail a reality. To make a contribution and to learn more, please contact Matthaei-Nichols Associate Director Karen Sikkenga: 734.647.7897; ksikkeng@umich.edu or Director of Development Gayle Steiner: gayles@umich.edu; 734.647.7847.

Leave the Car Behind

Matthaei-Nichols engages over 100 student interns every year. Almost 350 students and 38 U-M groups logged over 3,250 hours volunteering at the Campus Farm and elsewhere on our properties. Additionally, more than 140,000 people visit Matthaei each year. Most of these visitors use the four-wheeled option to get here. With a hiking and biking trail U-M students, faculty and staff, and the public can leave the car at home and go green in a meaningful way.
The Nature Academy also stepped forward to create a number of named internships. These include donors Ian and Sally Bund to make the above goals a reality. Donors have Enriching the Nature Education Initiative is $200,000 in seed money from "At the core of the Nature Academy is the hands-on program. The program is further supplemented by workshops, demonstrations, and field trips to peer institutions. Matthaei-Nichols' summer internships are unique, says Grese, because of the diversity of the students who apply and the job opportunities offered. Over the course of the summer each intern is required to research and implement a project. Finally, all internships circle back to nature, he adds. "They all relate to sharing nature, gardens, and the environment in some way with members of the University and broader community. The value of the internships lies in the hands-on approach. "This kind of direct learning has long been considered an effective approach to reaching with the expectation that individuals learn more readily from doing some activity themselves rather than simply being told how to do something," says Grese. "Students are challenged to collect information, solve real problems, work directly with people, and engage directly in gardens and natural spaces as part of their regular work." Just ask a few former interns what their time at Matthaei-Nichols meant to them. Zach Guzicki is now in his third year working for Matthaei-Nichols (currently as an Arb caretaker). Guzicki spent many childhood summers playing in the fields, forests, and streams, he recalls, and this passion and wonder for nature followed him to college. His internship gave him the opportunity to work with knowledgeable staff and develop practical field skills that he can use later in his career. Says Guzicki, "The skills and connections that I have made during my time here will be critical on my journey to save the planet." Former intern Andrew Miller studies not the environment but writing and poetry. And yet there were nature connections to be made, he says. "I used my education in English in a dozen different ways during the internship. So literature is relevant and valuable in countless professional environments." And there are health and restorative benefits to working so close to nature, Miller observes. "In thirty seconds I could be in the trees or watching the herons fish in Willow Pond. That benefited my happiness and the quality of work I was able to produce every day."

The Nature Academy is part of our recently launched Nature Education Initiative. The initiative’s goals are four-fold:

- Extend our outreach programs to diverse, underserved audiences in collaboration with University and other communities.
- Strengthen the academic and professional rigor of our internship program.
- Encourage collaboration with like-minded units managing U-M properties, land conservancies and state organizations.
- Draw attention to and create opportunities for students to engage in field-based learning.

Enriching the Nature Education Initiative is $200,000 in seed money from donors Ian and Sally Bund to make the above goals a reality. Donors have also stepped forward to create a number of named internships. These include internships dedicated to the Campus Farm, Gaffield Children’s Garden, and others. For more on that story and how you can help, see page 7.

A Strategic Plan for Change and Growth

Last year we began putting together the pieces of a strategic plan for our organization. Working with the provost’s office, Director Bob Grese and Associate Director Karen Sikkenga hired Rick Daley from EMD Consulting to help us forge a set of guidelines that would challenge our way of thinking and change the way we do business—for the better. The plan contained a set of transformative goals and priorities for achieving those goals. In an all-hands-on-deck approach the entire staff is on board and participating, making their voices heard. We also consulted with community leaders, advisory groups, volunteers, and others. The result is a document that lays out three transformative goals with priorities and timelines. All of it aligns with our commitment to collaborate with students, faculty, and the U-M and local communities. The beauty of the plan is that it’s a living document: we will revisit the plan each year with an eye to a three-year rolling time line. Another key piece of the strategic plan is its applicability to all aspects of Matthaei-Nichols. The plan will inform each meeting, each decision, and the bigger picture as well. Stay tuned for updates as we inaugurate the strategic plan this spring.

Azalea Bonsai Display

This May look for a rare opportunity to see azalea bonsai in full flower at Matthaei. The azaleas are part of renowned Ohio bonsai collector Melvyn Goldstein’s large assemblage of bonsai. Goldstein has generously loaned us the azaleas, which will be on display in the Bonsai and Penjing Garden at Matthaei at the end of May. Goldstein will also give a free public discussion during the azalea exhibit. Look for more information on our website and e-newsletter soon.

The Medicine Cabinet in the Garden

The much-anticipated Medicinal Garden at Matthaei opens August 2. While the garden will be a new site at Matthaei, the U-M and the State of Michigan have long connections with plants and their role in human health, Matthaei-Nichols Director Bob Grese points out: “The first documented botanical garden on campus was in part a pharmaceutical garden,” he says, “and since that time there have been various iterations of gardens on the U-M campus and greenhouse collections focused on ethnobotany and the study of medicinal herbs.” In addition, Michigan has a well-established track record of pharmaceutical companies such as Upjohn, Parke-Davis, and Pfizer with a history of testing plants for their medicinal value. The Medicinal Garden will touch on this history and share the connection between plants and modern medicine in the development of new drugs, dietary supplements, and the field of integrative medicine.

Plants in the garden will be arranged by human organ system—for example cardiovascular, respiratory, gastrointestinal—and by conditions such as infectious disease, diabetes, and cancer. It will feature plants that serve as the basis for current medicines and treatments as well as those used historically or in different cultures. For each group of plants, at least one marque plant related to a well-known medicine will be included, for example Taxol, derived from the Pacific yew (Taxus brevifolia). Only plants and medicines with strong clinical evidence for effectiveness will be included. The new garden is a collaboration between Matthaei-Nichols and faculty from the U-M College of Pharmacy and the U-M Medical School.

25 Years of Garden Walks

It should come as no surprise that many Arb & Gardens staffers take their work home, tending and growing beautiful gardens of their own. Now you’ll have the chance to explore these personal spaces and other gardens on the 25th Silver Jubilee Ann Arbor Garden Walk June 13 & 14. Hosted by Ann Arbor Farm & Garden, this special two-day
Turning the Tables
Thanks to our mission-affiliated groups for their donations to help purchase new tables, which arrived in mid-December. The all-purpose 8-foot tables are used for educational programming and classes, staff events, rentals, and more. There are still opportunities to help cover the cost of this investment ($250/table). Please contact visitor services manager David Berts for more information (dberts@umich.edu). And many thanks to the donor organizations that helped make the new tables possible: Michigan Garden Clubs, Great Lakes Judges, Ann Arbor Woman’s Farm & Garden, Madalyn Kaminski/Evergreen Herb Study Group.

Rattlesnake Workshop
Did you know that Michigan is home to its own venomous snake? Join us on a workshop highlighting the eastern massasauga rattlesnake. For this program, staff member Steven Parrish discusses the massasauga, its biology and ecology, detection and survey methods, and its habitat management challenges. Parrish will describe the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation-funded project at the Arboretum to restore massasauga habitat. Discussion is followed by a tour of the Gardens’ property to view massasauga survey methods (condition dependent) as well as management practices used to restore massasauga habitat. Friday, May 29, 1-4 pm.

Wild About Nature
Madalyn Kaminski has long been committed to helping families and patients at C.S. Mott Children’s Hospital connect with the Arboretum to experience the benefits of nature. This year, she started an intern student internship program, which she and the children’s education department, last year, we launched “Wild About Nature,” a program that gives students, healthcare professionals, and patients and families at Mott a way to engage with nature that didn’t exist before. The program officially launched at the beginning of the winter 2015 season, and with the recruitment and training of 18 energetic and dedicated student volunteers. In partnership with the Child Life staff at Mott we’ve been able to run programs at the Family Life Center for patients and siblings who are visiting the hospital. In February, student volunteers provided an escape for families by exploring the world of cocoa, from seed to chocolate bar. As the days grow longer and the plants in the Arb spring back to life, we hope to provide unique opportunities for Mott families, staff, and patients to enjoy and learn about the nature that’s just across the street. Contact wildaboutnature.staff@umich.edu for more information about the program.

Transitions
Horticulturist Judy Dluzen retired last December after 27 years at Matthaei-Nichols. Judy was a quiet but powerful force in shaping how many of our garden spaces looked, such as the Gateway Garden and the Gaffield Children’s Garden at Matthaei. Judy is also a talented designer. And she supplied our staff members regularly with farm-fresh eggs from her chickens. Congratulations and best wishes, Judy! Corinne Robertson left in January to become a conservation trainer/administrative assistant for the Bentley Historical Library. For Corinne this was a not-to-be-missed opportunity to sharpen her skills in the field of conservation, where she hopes to spend her career. When she successfully completes the training, she hopes to work full-time at the Bentley as a conservator. Stepping into Corinne’s role at Matthaei-Nichols last February is Rachel Powers, the new member of our development and administrative team. Rachel comes to us from the Bentley Historical Library where she was a secretary. She grew up in Ann Arbor and has been with the University of Michigan for 15 years. In her spare time, Rachel enjoys pinteretering, gardening, cooking, and spending time with her family. Welcome Rachel!

Donors Fund Nature Education Program
“If we’re not adding to those who are participating in nature-based programs, we’re falling short.” When donor Ian Bund spoke those words he was preparing to make a $200,000 gift to seed a nature education program at Matthaei-Nichols, a gift that he hopes will inspire others to reach a goal of $4 million. The program recognizes the need to offer nature-based education to a more diverse segment of adolescents and college students. Indeed, the remainder of the Bunds’ gift will replicate key elements of the U-M Center for Educational Outreach’s Camp Kinomoge, including field explorations, activities led by tribal elders connecting native culture and modern science, and interactions with U-M Native American Student Association members. During its inaugural year the U-M will bring metro-Detroit-area seventh and eighth graders here to participate in the program.

Recognizing the importance of our summer intern program, donors have also stepped forward to fund several named internships as part of the Nature Academy intern program. Named internships, some of them multiyear, have been funded by: Tom and Jeannette Gaffield, for a 2015 Gaffield Children’s Garden or Children’s Education program intern. Thomas S. Porter and the Porter Family Foundation, funding four Porter Family Interns at the Campus Farm. The Cook Family Foundation, for a 2015 intern who will dedicate a portion of his summer internship to managing a riverfront trail and landscaping project at Memorial Healthcare in Owosso, Michigan.

Welcome Ashley Hall
Hello there! My name is Ashley Hall and in January I inherited the Friends Membership Program from former membership coordinator Andy Sell. I’m grateful to have the opportunity to take over this successful and member-centered program at one of the most beautiful places in Michigan.

When I first arrived we’d just finished our 40th anniversary “Friends for Nature” campaign with special events and expanded opportunities for members. The campaign’s goal was to increase member numbers and dollars. From year’s end 2013 to 2014, membership numbers grew 22%, from 2,060 to 2,645 members. The membership dollars grew by nearly 20%, from $130,600 to $159,000. Talk about a success! Andy was able to accomplish substantial growth, and I’m excited to build on this already great program. I look forward to meeting you over tea at plant pre-sales, while you’re picking up reserved tickets for Shakespeare in the Arb, or maybe at a tour of the new Medicinal Garden opening in August. Please take a look at the enclosed Friends Member Guide for more information about the activities, events, and member perks for 2015.

Madalyn Kaminski’s appreciation of and membership in botanical gardens stretches far back. Her family had been long-time members of the Missouri Botanical Garden. And when Kaminski came to Ann Arbor it was natural to become a member here, “a place of beauty, peace, and learning,” she says. The Kaminski’s own membership, and that of Matthaei-Nichols goes back to 1989. For Kaminski, gardens have always been connected to health and wellness. “How can anyone think about health and wellness without also including food and gardens?” she asks. “We really are what we eat.” She heads the Herb Study Group, which meets regularly at Matthaei, and often staffs its popular Herb Studies outreach tables at the Arb’s plant sales and other events, dispenses advice on herbs and cooking as well as her popular lavender lemonade, satchets, and recipes.

Besides her leadership of the Herb Study Group, Kaminski volunteers as a Master Gardener at the Children’s Services Community Garden teaching young gardeners in the Juvenile Detention 4-H garden. And for several years, she notes, her volunteer group from the Washtenaw Youth Detention Center has attended the Food Summit in Washtenaw County. “The Summit addresses the food deserts in our state,” she explains, “places where there are few grocery stores of good quality and a lack of fresh produce available to the local community.”

A lifetime of gardening, cooking, and helping others discover the joys and benefits of nature has made Kaminski a seasoned practitioner. Her philosophy comes down to some key principals. “Grow your food if you can,” she suggests. “Save green places and pollinators. Use herbs for flavor instead of salt and fat.” Kaminski practices what she preaches. “I like to garden” she says. “Weeding is my moment of Zen.” Kaminski also grows most of her own vegetables. And she likes to walk, especially when possible or outside in winter. “You can find me at Matthaei Botanical Garden taking a 30-minute walk around the conservatory.”

Above left: Madalyn Kaminski dispenses wisdom about growing herbs at last summer’s intern open house. Kaminski, who offers a monthly program about herbs at Matthaei, has been a member here since 1989.
Matthaei-Nichols Garden Teams – Dig In!
Learn more: contact the Volunteer Coordinator at mngv.volunteer@umich.edu or 734.647.8528.

Horticulture
Our garden team volunteers enjoy fresh air, exercise, beautiful settings, social connections, and hands-on learning. Activities include planting, weeding, mulching, pruning, and other seasonal garden maintenance. Land a hand weekly or a few times per month during the growing season April–October.

Gaffield Children’s Garden
Enjoy this playful, interactive landscape as you help tend 15 unique garden spaces—including veggie, herb, and butterfly gardens, fairy & troll knob, and more. Must enjoy working in a kid-friendly atmosphere. Fridays, 9 am–noon.

Matthaei Garden Teams
Learn new gardening techniques while you help maintain a variety of unique display and exhibit gardens. Garden locations vary. Tuesdays, Wednesdays, & Thursdays, 9 am–noon.

Weekend Weeds
For those who work weekdays, this is a great opportunity to dig in and help out in the display gardens at Matthaei. Saturdays, 9 am–4 pm. May-August only.

Nichols Garden Team
Enjoy the beautiful natural setting of the Arb and help maintain the horticultural collections at the Washington Heights entrance including the Peony Garden, Gateway Garden, Laurel Ridge, and heirloom climbing roses. Mondays & Fridays, 9 am–noon.

Special Events
Looking for a more flexible, one-time-only volunteer option? Check out these special events and visit “Get Involved!” on our website to register.

Spring Plant Sales
May 9 & 10, May 16 & 17
Volunteers help make our annual plant sales hum! Sale 1: Mother’s Day Weekend, featuring hanging baskets & containers. Sale 2: Kitchen Favorites heirloom veggies & herbs. All proceeds benefit U-M Cultivating Community. Choose from a variety of positions and shifts.

Peonies Galore Sale Nichols Arboretum
Sat., May 30, 10 am (members-only pre-sale 9 am)
Featuring heirloom peonies from a local nursery. Sale held near the Washington Hts. entrance to the Arb next to the Peony Garden. Choose from a variety of positions and shifts. Sale continues until peonies are sold out.

Shakespeare in the Arb
Thurs., Sun., June 4-28
This summer marks the 15th anniversary of Shakespeare in the Arb, with A Midsummer Night’s Dream, directed by U-M Residential College’s Kate Mendeloff. Ushers and box office assistance needed (pm shifts only). Orientation required.

Horner Woods Eco-Restoration Workday
Trip Leader: Sylvia Taylor
Two dates: Sat., April 25, 1-4 pm; Sat., May 16, 1-4 pm
Join volunteers April 25 from the Michigan Botanical Club and Matthaei-Nichols to scout for invasive garlic mustard and help with light trail maintenance at Horner Woods, a wildflower sanctuary northeast of Matthaei. On May 16 we’ll continue to remove invasive garlic mustard at Horner Woods. Please dress for physical, outdoor work. Sturdy closed-toe shoes required. We provide tools and orientation. Minors are welcome with permission forms; those under 16 must be accompanied by a parent/guardian. April 25: meet in the west lobby at Matthaei Botanical Gardens, 1800 N. Dixboro Rd. to caravan to Horner Woods. On May 16, Meet at Matthaei Botanical Gardens, 1800 N. Dixboro Rd., near the back horticulture entrance (due to the second spring plant sale that will be held partly in the west lobby), to caravan to Horner Woods.

Natural Areas
Explore and learn more about the many natural areas, trees, trails, and native landscaping at the Arb and Gardens while helping out with seasonal maintenance.

Native Plant Team
Tend a variety of native landscapes at the Arb and Gardens including the Great Lakes Garden at Matthaei. Activities include general garden maintenance (April–September) and seed collection/propagation (October–March). Weekdays, 8-11 am/PM shifts.

Top: Matthaei Garden Team volunteers Cardyn Anderson-Burack and Karen Monnett commune with the sunflowers. Below: Volunteers Martha Johnson and Debra Beckwith-Weeks take a quick camera break at a recent Kitchen Favorites Sale.

Upgrade to a Family Tree Membership
And receive 6 youth and family free passes for fee-based classes. You also get $65 off Matthaei Birthday Party programs. A great value at $75. Visit our website for details. mngv.volunteer@umich.edu

New Program Connects Mott Kids and Families with the Arb
Student interns, Matthaei-Nichols, and staff at C.S. Mott Children’s Hospital collaborated earlier this year to launch Wild About Nature, a program that gives students, healthcare professionals, patients, and families at Mott a way to engage with nature that didn’t exist before. In February, seven energetic and dedicated student volunteers led families on an exploration of the world of cocoa, from seed to chocolate bar. Going forward, we hope to provide unique opportunities for Mott patients, families, staff, and to explore and learn about the nature that’s just across the street. For more information about the program contact wildaboutnature.staff@umich.edu.

Wild Wonderful Wednesdays
Guided and self-guided activities for families will be held throughout the summer on Wednesdays from 10:00 am. Discover your own adventure any day with family activity backdrops, scavenger hunt sheets, trail activities and self-guided hikes.

Mon., June 15, 10 am–noon
Bug Safari
Pollinator week is June 15-21. We depend on pollinators for our food, beautiful flowers and a wide diversity of plants. Native pollinators need open spaces filled with native plants to survive. Come learn about our insect pollinators by going on a guided bug safari and then explore ways that you can help native pollinators at home! $5 per child includes activities and materials. 15-YE-11

Wed., June 29, 10 am– noon
Incredible Edibles
Summer is the time for juicy fruits and delicious fresh veggies from the garden or farmers market. Discover what’s in season, explore the plant parts that we eat and make a summery treat to take home. $5 per child includes activities and materials. 15-YE-13

Youth & family programs - spring-summer 2015

Exploring Shakespeare’s comedy A Midsummer Night’s Dream in an outdoor setting! Campers take part in theater games, vocal exercises and direct work with the text, culminating in a performance of the play created and acted by the campers. Meet at 1610 Washington Hts. entrance to the Arb. Grades 2-5 and 6-9. For more information and to register visit reced.asps.k12.mi.us and click on “Camps.” (Photos left and below © Michele Yanga.)

For more information about the program contact wildaboutnature.staff@umich.edu.

Free Family Program:
Sun., July 26, 1-4 pm
Things with Wings
Celebrate our winged friends! This special event includes Monarch Watch with live butterflies and information on monarch migration; Leslie Science Center, and face-painting. Fun for the whole family! Free. (Photo © Michele Yanga.)
Robert E. Grese, Director
Karen Sikkenga,
Associate Director

friends newsletter
Joseph Mooney, Editor
jfmootney@umich.edu

For information:
734.647.7600
mbgna.umich.edu

Matthaei Botanical Gardens
1800 N. Dixboro Rd.
Ann Arbor MI 48105

Nichols Arboretum
1610 Washington Hts.
Ann Arbor MI 48109

U-M Regents
Michael J. Behm, Grand Blanc
Mark J. Bernstein, Ann Arbor
Laurence B. Deitch, Bloomfield Hills
Shauna Ryder Diggs, Grosse Pointe
Denise Ilitch, Bingham Farms
Andrea Fischer Newman, Ann Arbor
Andrew C. Richner, Grosse Pointe Park
Katherine E. White, Ann Arbor
Mark S. Schlissel (ex officio)

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