



UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Matthaei Botanical Gardens and Nichols Arboretum

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For Immediate Release

Beloved “Arb” Victim of Vandalism for the Second Time this Winter

Ann Arbor, Mich. (February 4, 2008) – Arboretum Caretaker Justin Heslinga heard a loud noise in the middle of the night Friday, and was saddened to arise and see that significant vandalism had occurred. Benches were pulled from the ground and tossed down the hill, trash dumped and garbage cans destroyed, and fences snapped off at the base. Vandalism like this is discouraging, but it is especially discouraging when it is the second time that it has happened this winter.

In December, one of the members of a local fraternity visited the Arboretum in the middle of the night and cut the top of a 25’ white fir off as a Christmas tree. The tree was damaged beyond repair and the cost to replace an established tree like the fir would be over \$7,000. Thanks to an anonymous tip, the vandal was found and according to his father he thought that the Arb was a forest, not a public space.

“What makes this so sad for us at MBGNA is that the vandalized benches were dedicated by community members to family and friends who have passed away,” states Karen Sikkenga, Associate Director of Matthaei Botanical Gardens and Nichols Arboretum. “This type of vandalism affects the entire community because this is a place devoted to our public. We all have a responsibility to make sure the Arb is taken care of.”

If you see suspicious persons or hear loud noises, please call the University Police at (734) 763-1131.

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The Matthaei Botanical Gardens and Nichols Arboretum (MBGNA) is 720 combined acres of gardens, trails, woods and prairie. With events, programs, classes, and activities, MBGNA is open every day of the year for visitors, with the Matthaei Botanical Garden visitor center closed on Mondays, and the Reader Center at the Nichols Arboretum closed Saturdays and Sundays. The Gardens are located at 1800 N. Dixboro Road. The Arboretum is located at 1610 Washington Heights.

Matthaei Botanical Gardens and Nichols Arboretum is owned by the University of Michigan, and celebrated its centennial anniversary this year. The mission of MBGNA is to promote environmental enjoyment, stewardship, and sustainability through education, research, and interaction with the natural world.