



Visitor &  
Education  
Center

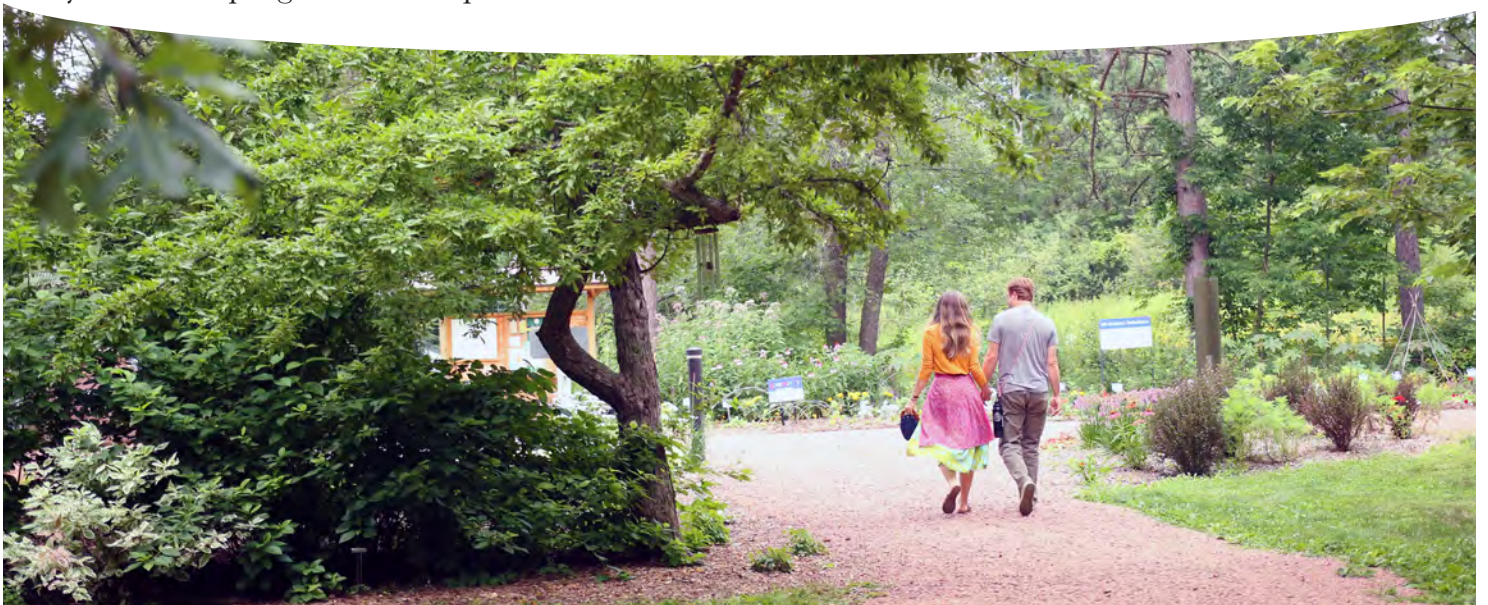
Monk  
Botanical  
Gardens

Capital  
Campaign

## The Gardens have been growing for 20 years. Now it's time to build for all seasons.

Wausau Botanic Gardens began with the Monk family's donation of land in 2003, followed by the dedication of hard-working volunteers to gradually transform the property into a 30-acre botanical garden open to the public seven days a week. Today, thousands of people visit the beautiful gardens every month at peak season for programs or just to experience the botanical spaces. It is a treasure unlike any other in the greater Wausau region, or most of Wisconsin. And it is time to construct a Visitor & Education Center that will finally provide all-season indoor space for guests, our talented staff, and year-round programs and experiences.

Botanical gardens are timeless attractions across the U.S., valued as delightful places to visit and for enriching a city's reputation as a great place to live, work, and recreate. But they don't work on that level without some kind of building facility. That's why this capital campaign stands out as one that will instantly create an exciting new statewide destination and elevate the brand of the greater Wausau region. The organization has engaged in a thorough process to develop a plan for the building and its operations. This project promises the transformational impact of a fresh, but enduring new economic development cornerstone for the region. We hope you will join us.



Front entrance view



# Help us realize the possibilities for the Gardens and for Wausau.

It took 20 years to grow from a grassroots, volunteer-driven dream into a professionally staffed, 30-acre botanical garden that draws thousands of people a year to its programs and grounds. Yet Wausau Botanic Gardens' full potential remains out of reach simply because it does not have a building. No on-site offices. No indoor space to offer our community events and workshops year-round. No shelter during inclement weather or somewhere warm to sit.

As an already beloved fixture of the Wausau area, we could offer so much more, serve so many more people, and attract visitors from many more miles away. The time is right to finally add a Visitor & Education Center, the main feature of the Gardens' original Master Plan developed in 2005.

We're asking you to become a lead donor to the Gardens' first-ever capital campaign to build this year-round, multi-purpose facility. Our goal: an architecturally stunning, practical and flexible Visitor & Education Center constructed with environmentally sensitive methods and materials that themselves will be an educational tool for all ages. This project honors Mr. Monk's original vision as well as the passion of volunteers and

donors since the Gardens' inception in 2003 as a non-profit 501c(3) organization.

Botanical gardens are a key attraction and proud feature of premiere communities around the U.S. They are treasured for adding a fresh, modern spin to an area's quality of life. In these delightful "living museums," design aesthetics intersect with nature, and visitors are treated to multi-sensory experiences unique to botanical gardens.

That's why we've aimed for an exceptionally thoughtful, impressive building that itself will add prestige to the Wausau region and attract visitors from near and far. The outdoor gardens themselves are the main attraction, of course. A Visitor & Education Center is the essential portal not only to the botanicals, but also to an expanded array of services, experiences, events and programs. The building flows into the outdoors. The outdoors spill into the building.

There's no doubt that a fully realized Wausau Botanic Gardens will elevate the brand of the entire Wausau region. A Visitor & Education Center will make it happen. Everything else at the Gardens is already in place.



## Key features.

**Great Hall** - Major events, exhibitions, large group programs, multi-purpose flex space, community and private rentals. Features large, double-facing fireplace.

**Workshop Room** - Year-round programs, adult & youth education, additional event space. Outfitted for both classroom experiences and hands-on “messy” labs.

**Catering Kitchen** - Event food and beverage service.

**Parking Lot** - 150 spaces approx. Entry gate and landscaping present the important first examples of the Gardens.

**Entry/Reception/Gift Shop** - Covered entrance and large lobby to accommodate groups, admission tickets and memberships, concessions, branded mementos, brochures and other engagement materials.

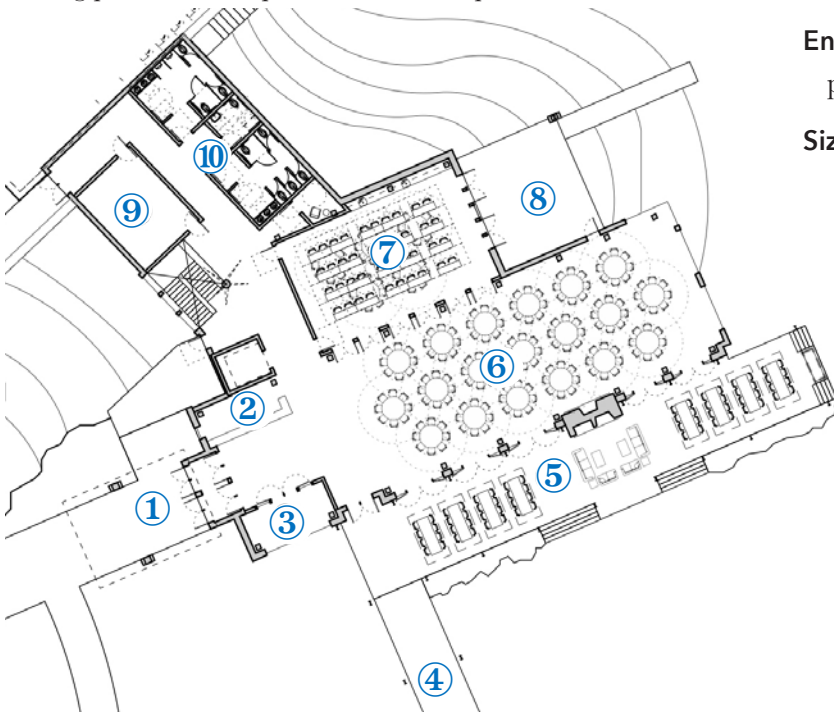
**Staff/Administrative Offices** - Allows for the first time: on-site business meetings and management; on-site office equipment such as computers, printers, file storage.

**Covered veranda** connected to Great Hall, with fireplace.

**Local stone, wood** features pay homage to area’s history.

**Environmental design:** Green roof, photovoltaic system, passive solar, natural lighting, other energy efficiencies.

**Size:** 15,400 sq feet. **Person capacity:** 350 estimated.



- 1 Covered entry
  - 2 Reception, work station
  - 3 Merchandise, concessions
  - 4 Covered walkway (green roof)
  - 5 Covered veranda with fireplace (double facing)
  - 6 Great Hall, multi-purpose/exhibition area with fireplace
  - 7 Workshop/program room
  - 8 Covered deck
  - 9 Catering kitchen
  - 10 Restrooms
- Lower level (not shown): Staff offices with natural lighting; direct access to gardens; storage, utility and mechanical.



Tots in the Gardens program

# Fresh, new experiences. Financial stability for the Gardens.

A Visitor & Education Center presents not only exciting possibilities for the public, but also a crucial path to sustain Monk Gardens into the future with revenue opportunities that are a staple at botanical gardens around the U.S. Here are just a few examples of the programming and fiscal considerations:

## Programs and Partnerships

- Preschoolers participating in Head Start in the Gardens enjoy this experience just four months a year now, but the program could easily run year-round.
- Adult programming can run through winter, which is especially important to gardeners preparing for spring.
- Regional schools will have a nature-based program partner all year round. We already host field trips, but not in colder months because there's no place to warm up. Yet, there's plenty to see and learn about in winter at the Gardens.
- Seniors and special needs patrons who cannot visit on cold days or risk inclement weather will enjoy more access.

## Special Events and Revenue

- Indoor botanical exhibits: The Visitor & Education Center could display bonsai art, tropical flora, house plants, etc.

- Admission fees and memberships provide steady income for most botanical gardens. Our operation currently has no way to collect daily entrance fees, and membership now is mainly a charitable exercise. (Thank you, members!)
- Group tours, new events, business partnerships: Imagine a business hosting a free day at the Gardens with a chance to meet and interact with visitors.
- Security and ability to monitor attendance: It's currently risky or impossible to place anything of high value in the Gardens, such as interactive outdoor art, special effects equipment, or magnifying scopes.
- Private events already provide revenue for the Gardens, and will become a major, sustaining source of income with an available indoor space. This is the case at most all botanical gardens across the U.S.

Our 30 acres, seasonal programs, and expanding theme gardens already have set the stage for Wausau Botanic Gardens to become a regional and state-wide attraction.

# Our careful steps toward the building concept and planning.



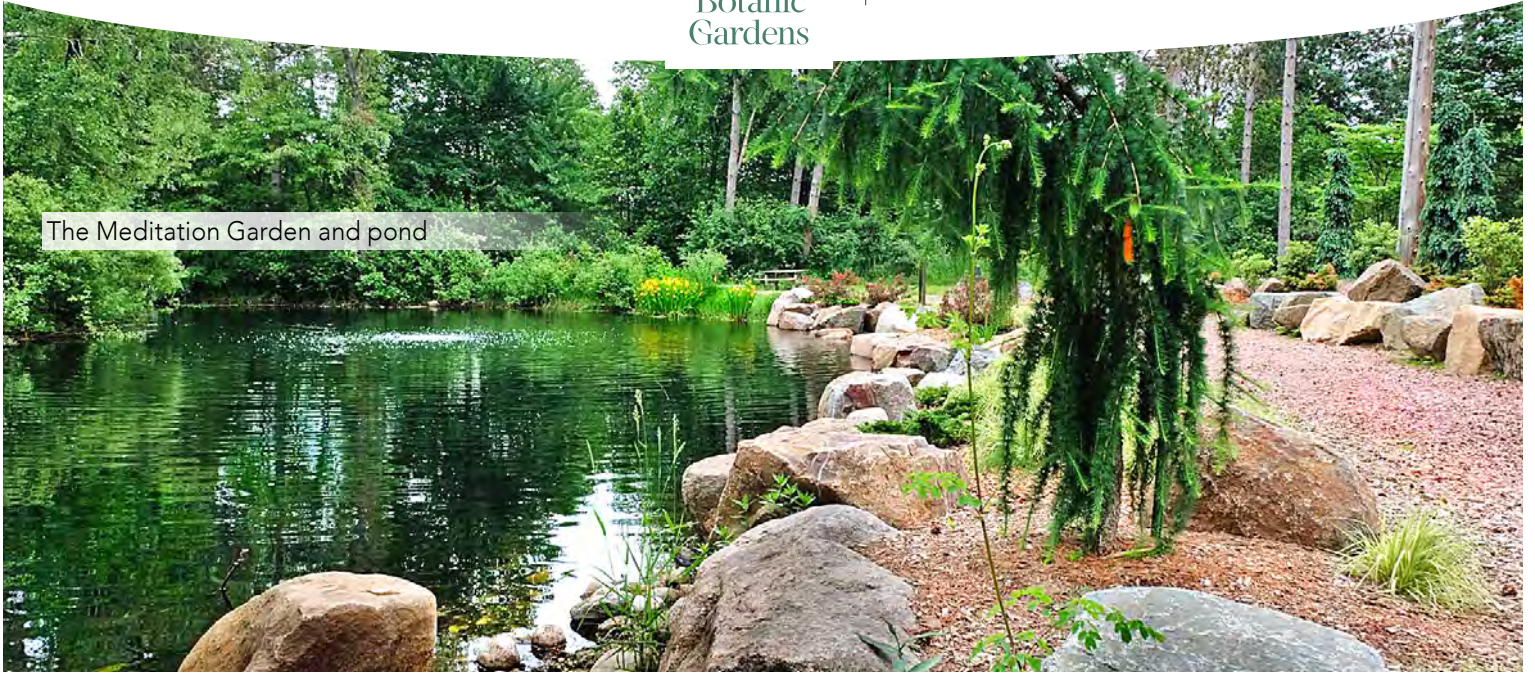
Please read TKWA's project booklet to learn about the thoughtfulness, and principles of art, practicality, nature and conservation that guided the design process.

- 2005 Board adopts Wausau Botanic Gardens Master Plan, which includes a visitors center as a main feature. Volunteers incrementally complete other phases in the next 12+ years, such as utility infrastructure, themed gardens, paths, Treehouse and outdoor kitchen (*potager*)
- 2019 Master Plan revised under Executive Director Darcie Howard, who was hired in 2017 as the first step toward a full-time, professional staff
- 2020 Feasibility study assesses readiness for a capital campaign.
- 2021 \$180,000 raised for pre-campaign conceptual building design, marketing, organizational preparations
  - Board and staff consult with the Aldo Leopold Foundation to identify an architectural firm with expertise designing a nature-based facility, and to learn about that international organization's recent enhancement projects at its headquarters in Baraboo, Wis.
  - TKWA-The Kubala Washatko Architects (Cedarburg, Wis.) selected for the conceptual design. The firm works with board, staff and volunteers over six months to identify priorities, uses, and vision for the building and the Gardens overall.
- 2022 TKWA presents its Visitor & Education Center Concept Plan to the board, staff and key stakeholders, including major donors, volunteers and capital campaign committee recruits. The detailed plan can serve as a phased implementation guide for the next steps.

Walkway from parking lot to front entrance



The Meditation Garden and pond



## Ensuring success with a strong organizational foundation.

We understand that a major capital campaign contribution represents your investment in the community. Our board of directors has approached this project responsibly, prudently and professionally to ensure the Gardens as an organization is prepared to sustain this gift into the future and create a thriving, community gem for the Wausau region.

To accomplish our longstanding goal of building a Visitor & Education Center, we embarked on an intense pre-campaign effort to shore up the organization's capacity and leadership, both to execute a capital campaign, and to operate the 15,400-square-foot facility with all its wonderful potential.

In early 2020 we commissioned a capital campaign feasibility study based on discussions and feedback from a diverse group of 37 stakeholders, major donors, and community leaders. This insight guided us toward structuring an even more effective and financially healthy nonprofit organization, on top of the strides made since 2017 under Executive Director Darcie Howard:

- Redesigned board development process, to recruit additional talent and experience from the community.

- Developed a 5-year budget that includes the operation of a Visitor & Education Center and a detailed plan for staffing and programs.
- Raised and clearly defined board expectations in conjunction with instituting a team-driven approach to philanthropy and fundraising.
- Created a marketing/development plan with proven, effective processes for fundraising and engagement.
- Hired an advertising agency to develop a marketing campaign to raise awareness of the Gardens.

The results are impressive. In addition to raising \$180,000 for the pre-campaign phase in 2021, the Gardens simultaneously more than doubled its regular annual fundraising from the previous year—or any other year in its history!

A number of local experts, excited by the great potential for this community-transforming project, are volunteering to help guide the construction planning and process, fundraising, and best practices to help Wausau Botanic Gardens become a regional attraction.

We hope you become part of this incredible vision.