

**Matthaei Botanical Gardens
& Nichols Arboretum**
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Ann Arbor, MI 48105

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Water: Why We Care about It



Living next to the
greatest natural
supply of fresh
water in the world
can often give us a
false sense that the
supply is endless

Last summer our region experienced record-breaking heat along with drought conditions. But the amount of rainfall we receive can easily move to the other extreme—too much precipitation. Above, after one of many torrential rainfalls in the spring of 2011, Willow Pond at Matthaei Botanical Gardens nearly reached the main driveway. In some years, especially during the summer 2012 drought, we have to make tough choices in deciding which plants will get our precious water. One way to answer this challenge is by taking steps toward good stewardship of this precious resource through improvements to our facilities, increasing the number of drought-tolerant native species on our properties, creating rain gardens, and making road improvements, among others.

Last summer I thought a lot about water. Foremost on my mind was the lack of water as we suffered through record-breaking heat and drought conditions but I also thought about just how important water is in our lives and what we can do to be better stewards of water in the Great Lakes region. Living in a place with the greatest natural supply of fresh water in the world can often give us a false sense that the supply is endless.

At Matthaei Botanical Gardens and Nichols Arboretum, water has played a major role in several projects this past year. One that will be very obvious to visitors is our connection to the Ann Arbor Township water main along Dixboro Road. Gone will be the heavy mineral taste from the well water used for our drinking fountains and the iron stains on fixtures in our bathrooms! As we install new fountains and bathroom fixtures, we've been very conscious of water conservation. All of our new bathroom fixtures will use less water. At our drinking fountains, we'll encourage visitors to fill their own water bottles rather than purchasing bottled water.

This past summer, the drought shaped many of our activities. We had a narrow window for planting in the spring and early summer, and we had to devote much time watering recently planted trees and shrubs. In some cases, we had to make tough choices in deciding which plants would get our precious water. Fortunately, over the past few years we'd been reducing the number of water-intensive landscapes around our property and increasing the number of drought-tolerant native species

wherever possible. This has certainly helped reduce our overall demand for water.

At the other end of the spectrum, too much water has often created problems for us. At Nichols Arboretum, the combination of very steep topography and highly erodible soils has combined for real challenges in managing our steep trails and roads. This summer, we were able to rebuild a section of our historic Nichols Drive from Geddes down to Heathdale. All along the road are new rain-gardens and bio-swales that will slow down the water running off the road, filter it through dense plantings, and encourage much of it to infiltrate into the soil. The end result will be less erosion and more stable road surfaces for walking and jogging and cleaner water as it filters through the soil. As a side benefit, the road will have an edge of native grasses and wildflowers. We're planning to repair another section of roads at the Arboretum next spring and will continue until we've upgraded all of our historic roads.

The idea of rain gardens as a routine part of a landscape is also something we're incorporating in some of the other new gardens that we're creating. In our new Bonsai and Penjing Garden at Matthaei, for instance, all of the paved walkways and roof structures will drain into planting beds that will help infiltrate that water into the ground. Most of the year these garden spaces will be dry, but they are intended to flood temporarily after major rainstorms. Similarly our new Great Lakes Gardens that will open in the spring will have a number of rain gardens throughout to temporarily capture runoff from rainstorms and allow it to filter

into the ground. Doing this also adds a diversity of habitats for showcasing a greater variety of plants. The bio-swales constructed as part of our parking lot and road improvements several years ago at Matthaei have become colorful highlights with their rich variety of prairie flowers throughout the summer and fall.

So, how have we been able to afford to make these various improvements? Some of these projects, such as the new water main, have been covered by University funds. But others, such as the Arboretum roads or the new garden spaces, were made possible by private donations or from a combination of our own funds (memberships and other donations) or matching funds from the University. The end result is a vast improvement to our facilities and to the experiences of our visitors as well as better stewardship of our water resources.

As you visit our properties next year, give some thought to how we're managing our water resources. Enjoy the water from our drinking fountains, but also watch how our various rain gardens capture and recycle precious rain water. As you wander along the trails of our new Great Lakes Gardens, you'll see many of the unique plants of our region that do the hard work of stabilizing our dunes, enriching our forests, and filtering water throughout the region. Even though we can't recreate the Great Lakes as part of the gardens, I hope you'll appreciate the biological systems that help make this region a great place to live!

Bob Grese

Bob Grese, *Director*
Matthaei Botanical Gardens &
Nichols Arboretum



On the Cover



The front of the annual report features a photo of students working in the Campus Farm last July. Thanks to a grant from the Planet Blue Student Innovation Fund and the enthusiastic endorsement of President Mary Sue Coleman, the U-M Sustainable Food Program broke ground on the first-ever student-run farm at the University of Michigan.

Despite the hot, dry summer and the lack of regular rain that makes any vegetable garden happy, students, Matthaei-Nichols staff, and groups from units such as the Taubman College of Architecture + Urban Planning pitched in throughout the summer with guidance, knowledge, and bushels of elbow grease. By fall, the student farm grew

lush with produce. A harvest festival last October capped a bountiful summer, while plans and plants for next season were already sprouting.



Earth Angels Program in the Environment graduate Jessica Ruff (left) and School of Natural Resources and Environment student Alyson Green inaugurated the Campus Farm last spring with their earthly version of snow angels. Both Ruff and Green also interned at Matthaei-Nichols last summer.

Major Gifts, Major Gardens

Gifts totaling over \$1 million turned construction of two long-awaited gardens into a reality at Matthaei.

With its generous studio and display spaces, the Bonsai and Penjing Garden will allow us to display much more of our collection of bonsai and penjing, recently augmented with purchases from renowned local bonsai artist and teacher Jack Wikle. The garden site is located behind the Conservatory and adjacent to the perennial garden.

The Great Lakes Gardens will recreate five regional habitats, such as dune and cobble beach, in which many native Great Lakes' flora live. Native orchids are among the most striking of our regional flora; thanks to a gift from U-M alumnus Richard C. Wilson in memory of his wife, one of these garden spaces will be named the Jean Avis Wilson Native Orchid Garden. The Warren H. Wagner Fern Collection, named for a former director of Matthaei Botanical Gardens and professor at U-M, will be interspersed throughout the gardens. Both gardens will open next spring, making 2013 a watershed year for the Botanical Gardens.



Above: A view of the bonsai garden under construction last fall.

Right: Plants in alvar pockets near Dorcas Bay on the Bruce Peninsula, Ontario. Alvar is limestone plain with little or no soil that often supports rare plants. Apart from the Great Lakes region, alvar exists in only four other places in the world. Alvar habitats often experience environmental extremes such as flooding in spring and drought in summer.

Below left: A new tribute label.



Grants Fuel Multiple Projects at Matthaei-Nichols



Above: Volunteers from Ford Motor Company and Matthaei-Nichols staff pause for a break amid installation work in the 'Maize & Blue Garden' near the west entrance of Matthaei Botanical Gardens. The garden features native plants and monumental slabs of granite donated by Professor Jon Rush, Penny W. Stamps School of Art & Design.

Recent grants helped launch or continue several mission-critical projects at Matthaei-Nichols. An award from the Sustain Our Great Lakes program, administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, funded a project to restore eastern massasauga rattlesnake habitat at Matthaei Botanical Gardens. The two-phase project began in fiscal year 2012 and runs through FY 2013, with total grant amounts for both phases at more than \$186,000. Major conservation goals for the second phase include ecological restoration work on 50 new acres of massasauga habitat and the removal of exotic invasives on 25 of those acres. The new award also allows us to retain a full-time staff person to work directly on the project with our Natural Areas team.

A \$90,000 grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) funds an assessment of at-risk native plant communities growing on our four properties and pays for a natural areas consultant and U-M students to map and evaluate the communities for conservation care and to create a set of

natural area stewardship recommendations. The IMLS awarded another grant of nearly \$80,000 for restoration, management, and curation of the historic Nichols Arboretum Peony Garden, the largest collection of heritage peonies in North America. Last summer, peony experts from around the country visited the Arb and Matthaei for a marathon peony identification project that helped put in place an exhaustive database at the heart of the new website. Part of the grant dollars underwrote a new website dedicated to the Peony Garden, with a formal roll out of the site in 2013.

Longtime Matthaei-Nichols partner Ford Motor Company provided multiple mini-grants. The grants made possible the "Maize and Blue Garden" island near the west entrance to Matthaei, walking paths and a cedar split rail fence in the Maple Glen area of Nichols Arboretum, and sorely needed new benches for growing plants in our greenhouses.



Tribute Trees Sport New Labels

A project to relabel all of Matthaei-Nichols' tribute trees and woody plants was completed in 2012. Along with plant ID information the labels show each tree's tribute status and include the name of the donor or the person being honored or memorialized and the year of the dedication. The new labels—109 in total—make it easier to locate each tree via our online searchable Tribute Tracker.

The labels perform a double duty, benefiting the community and a beloved University of Michigan class. Each fall going back several decades, the School of Natural Resources and Environment and the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary

Biology have offered the popular Woody Plants class (EEB 436/NRE 436). Instructors traditionally send students to the Arb for independent study to learn the plants—unlabeled until now. As a study aid we've labeled and mapped the Woody Plants list to facilitate identification. Thanks to the new labels, what started as a classroom helper has blossomed into an educational tree walk for anyone who wants to learn the plants. Look for the list of labeled plants to grow as we continue to add plants going forward.

Student Farm Takes Root

The earth moved at Matthaei Botanical Gardens last spring. With the University's enthusiastic endorsement and backed by a grant from the Planet Blue Student Innovation Fund, the U-M Sustainable Food Program broke ground on a first-ever student-run farm at Matthaei Botanical Gardens. Despite the challenges of a hot, dry summer the students' efforts bore fruit—in this case, tomatoes, green peppers, basil, and more, along with a well-attended Harvest Festival October 4. Their motto: "Kale to the Victors." A larger plot is planned for 2013. For more information visit the Matthaei-Nichols website (mbgna.umich.edu) or the Sustainable Food Program site, umsfp.org.



donors at the \$250 and above level for fiscal year 2012 (July 1, 2011–June 30, 2012). In addition to the donors listed below, our Friends membership level is near 2,200—an all-time high. (Please note that with the exception of cumulative lifetime supporters, endowments, and planned giving and bequests, the following list reflects membership and gifts only during fiscal 2012.)

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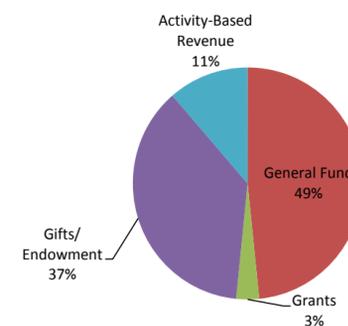
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Statement of Activity

FY 2012 REVENUE



General Fund \$1,773,727

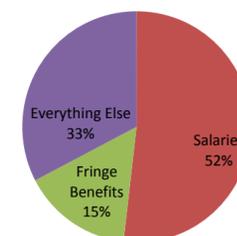
Grants \$118,072

Gifts / Endowments \$1,358,007

Activity-based Revenue \$416,032

Total \$3,665,838

FY 2012 EXPENSES



Salaries \$1,565,073

Fringe Benefits \$467,603

Everything Else \$986,423