

WEGERZYN GARDENS
FOUNDATION

The Garden Bridge

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President's Corner

The first question was always the same.

“Dad, when can we go to the Children’s Garden?”

Anna asked it so often that it became part of the rhythm of summer. Long before she was old enough to drive, before college and careers and a move to Charlotte, she would eagerly anticipate our trips to the Children’s Discovery Garden at Wegerzyn Gardens MetroPark. For several summers, we made special visits there. We wandered winding pathways, watched fish swim in the beautiful pond, explored hidden corners and watched butterflies dance among the flowers.

Today, my daughter lives hundreds of miles away, but some things never change. She still loves visiting parks, gardens and natural spaces wherever she goes. Looking back, I can’t help but think that those days at Wegerzyn helped plant the seed. That is why the Children’s Discovery Garden remains one of the most important places in our community.

At a time when children spend more hours than ever looking at screens, the garden offers something increasingly rare: a chance to experience nature with all five senses. Children can follow trails, splash in water features, explore trees and flowers, discover insects and birds, and learn through play rather than a digital device. The garden was designed specifically to encourage curiosity about the natural world, allowing children to touch, smell, listen and observe. It is education disguised as fun.

For many families, it also serves as an introduction to gardening. A child who watches a butterfly land on a flower or sees a tomato ripen on a vine begins to understand something important: nature is not something separate from us. We are part of it.

That lesson matters.

...continued on page 2.

In an era of sprawling development and busy schedules, places like the Children's Discovery Garden help foster environmental awareness in the next generation. The children who explore the garden today may become tomorrow's conservationists, gardeners, landscape architects, scientists or simply adults who appreciate the beauty and importance of the outdoors.

This time of year is especially beautiful at Wegerzyn. Late summer in the Miami Valley brings a colorful display of flowering plants. Visitors are likely to find pollinator favorites such as coneflowers, black-eyed Susans, bee balm, garden phlox, asters and native prairie flowers attracting butterflies and bees. Dahlias and zinnias often provide vibrant color through August, while ornamental grasses begin adding texture and movement throughout the gardens.

Home gardeners can take inspiration from what thrives there. Early fall is an excellent time to begin planning additions to next year's landscape. Native plants such as purple coneflower, black-eyed Susan, butterfly weed and asters provide long-lasting color while supporting pollinators. Gardeners can also begin preparing spots for spring-blooming bulbs such as tulips, daffodils and crocuses. Vegetable gardeners often plant fall crops including lettuce, spinach, kale and radishes for a late-season harvest. The beauty we enjoy at Wegerzyn does not happen by accident. It requires planning, maintenance, programming and long-term investment. That is where community support becomes essential.

The Wegerzyn Gardens Foundation was created in 1973 to support the educational and horticultural programs at the metropark and to help ensure its continued development through fundraising and memberships. Donations help sustain programming, educational opportunities and improvements throughout the gardens.

When people contribute to the foundation, they are doing more than helping maintain flower beds. They are helping preserve a place where families can create memories, where children can discover nature, and where future generations can develop a lifelong appreciation for the outdoors. They are investing in an asset that benefits the entire community.

That investment pays dividends that cannot be measured in dollars alone.

It can be measured in the excitement of a child spotting a butterfly for the first time.

It can be measured in a family spending a summer afternoon together.

And it can be measured years later when a grown daughter, now living in another city, still seeks out parks and gardens because of experiences she had as a child.

The Children's Discovery Garden gave my daughter wonderful memories. More importantly, it helped nurture a lasting love of nature.

That is why preserving and supporting places like Wegerzyn matters and I encourage you to consider giving a donation to our foundation to help with this idea.

Every donation, every membership and every visit helps ensure another child will someday ask the same question:

"When can we go to the Children's Garden?"

Richard Gillette

Richard Gillette, Board President

50th Anniversary of MayFair

By Mary Gordon

This year marked 50 years of selling plants through the MayFair sale to support Wegerzyn Gardens Foundation. While the event has seen some changes over the years, MayFair is settling nicely into its new home at the 2nd Street Market during the first weekend in May. For the first time since moving to the Market, members were able to shop additional hours in the evening before the sale opened to the public. The turnout for the Thursday evening event was fantastic, with many Foundation members filling their cars with beautiful perennials, annuals, and the first choice of passalongs. The MayFair committee is excited to announce that next year, members will again have the same opportunity to shop on Thursday evening before the sale opens during regular 2nd Street Market weekend hours.



The sale could not have been successful, raising more than \$8,000 for projects and programs at Wegerzyn Gardens MetroPark, had it not been for the number of volunteers. Volunteers were on hand for every aspect of the sale, setting up tables, delivering plants, cashing out sales, and even potting up the passalongs from their own gardens for purchases. OSU Master Gardener volunteers were also on hand during the sale to help ensure proper care of the plants, and assisting customers



with informed choices about their purchases.

MayFair at the Market gives the Foundation a unique opportunity to share information about Wegerzyn Gardens MetroPark and its horticultural presence in our community with shoppers at the 2nd Street Market.

For 2027, the MayFair committee is looking for anyone interested in an assisting leadership role. A successful candidate needs to have some daytime availability during the week leading up to the sale, as well as have a love for plants and organizational skills. Reach out to Mary Gordon, mg140602@gmail.com if interested or to learn more about volunteering at MayFair.



Gift & Garden Shop

By Carol Self



It's been a great summer at the Gift & Garden Shop. Second Street Market has been buzzing every weekend, and our gift shop sales have been strong.

Plants continue to be our strongest category of sales along with colorful mineral specimens, crack-your-own geodes (popular with both children and adults), and quirky things like mood rings and tea towels printed with humorous sayings. Our buyers are always on the lookout for attractive merchandise.



Thanks to our members and friends who support this Foundation fund-raising effort.



HOURS

Fridays 11 AM – 3 PM
Saturdays 9 AM – 3 PM
Sundays 11 AM – 3 PM

Jump on the Bus!

By Donna Zobrist

We have completed our first bus trip of 2026 with our visit to Onederings Lavendar Farm in Clarksville, the Secret Garden in Waynesville and time spent exploring downtown Waynesville. We had a little excitement including the bus going off the edge of the driveway at the lavender farm and requiring a wrecker to pull it out. I am always amazed by our passengers who are so good natured and willing to help when something like this happens. Thank you!

Next up is our September 16 trip looking back at some Ohio History. We will visit Darby Creek MetroPark which is home to a small, managed herd of bison, once plentiful in Ohio. After lunch, we will visit the Hopewell Cultural Historic Park containing remnants of burial and ceremonial mounds. It has been named a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Cost for members is \$99 and for nonmembers \$109. Registration is due by August 26.

We end the 2026 bus trip adventures by heading south to Jungle Jim's in Fairfield for a tour and some shopping. Bring your coolers! We will then visit the American Sign Museum, one of our favorites. Seeing all the types of signs is truly a trip down memory lane! We will make a stop at Berns Garden Center in Middletown on the way home and, perhaps, find a piece of holiday décor. The price for members is \$140 and for nonmembers is \$150. Registration is due by November 23, but this trip tends to fill up fast!

Hope to see you on the bus!

Garden Party

By Rich Gillette

An evening of dining, music and celebration will mark a major milestone for one of the region's most beloved family destinations when the Wegerzyn Gardens Foundation hosts its annual Garden Party on Sept. 10.

This year's event carries a special theme: the 20th anniversary of the Children's Discovery Garden at Wegerzyn Gardens MetroPark. The annual fundraiser supports the continued maintenance and enhancement of the public gardens while honoring two decades of inspiring children and families to connect with nature.

Guests will gather on Wegerzyn's Garden Green for cocktails, hors d'oeuvres, dinner, music, dancing and fundraising activities, including a raffle and silent auction. Foundation leaders describe the evening as a birthday celebration for a garden that has become a destination for hands-on learning and outdoor exploration.

"This is our premier event and helps us raise funds for important projects in the gardens. I encourage everyone to take the time to relax at our party and help us give back to a place we all enjoy freely," said Rich Gillette, Wegerzyn Gardens Foundation president.

Since opening 20 years ago, the Children's Discovery Garden has offered generations of young visitors a place to learn through play. The garden features interactive attractions such as a sensory garden, music maze, fossil cave, sand play areas and water features that encourage exploration of Ohio's natural environments.

The garden is one of the signature attractions within Wegerzyn Gardens MetroPark, a public garden that

has served the Dayton community for decades. The Wegerzyn Gardens Foundation supports the park through fundraising, membership programs and volunteer efforts that help maintain gardens, expand educational offerings and fund special projects.

The event begins at 5:30 p.m. with wine and hors d'oeuvres in the Children's Garden, followed by a formal dinner and dinner at the end.

To purchase tickets or to be a sponsor for the event, go to wegerzyncgardensfoundation.org and you will find an EVENTS tab to click on.



What's in Bloom in June Walk

By India Clarke

It was a beautiful hot summer day when we met in the North Plaza to stroll through the gardens with Franz Kirchner, Lead Horticultural Technician at Wegerzyn Gardens MetroPark.

A group of nine took a leisurely stroll from shady spot to shady spot while admiring the beauty of the summer gardens.



We saw Marvin and Chris Olinsky, on their garden bench just outside the Children's Discovery Garden, just before we started. They were celebrating Marvin's birthday and what a lovely day to do so! Marvin was the third Director of the parks from 1987-2001 and was a force behind the RiverScape project and transforming Island Park.

metroparks.org/about/history/people-history/#marvin-olinsky

Franz pointed out the blooming Magnolia tree to the left of the entrance to the Garden Center building, which had a lovely, sweet aroma. Then we wandered through the Children's Garden to admire the pond and flowers



everywhere. We toured the Arbor Garden and discussed the new ways they are planting there.



We made the rounds and ended at the prairie area looking out over the Living Room at the front entrance. A wonderful day in the gardens!

Fall walk in the Community Gardens and Foxton Court areas on Sunday, September 13th

By India Clarke

Join us at the Garden Center building at 2pm on Sunday, September 13th before we drive back to the Community Gardens and Foxton Court area for an informative walk and talk with Wegerzyn Gardens MetroPark staff. See what people are growing in their plots out back and then we will tour the new Foxton Court area.



Did you know that Wegerzyn has over 300 annual and organic plots spanning a 6.5 acre area? Standard seasonal plots are 400-800 sq. Ft. each and cost \$40 per plot annually (May-Oct.).



Organic plots are available both seasonal and year-round. Gardeners must abide by organic gardening principles and use only products on the Organic Materials Review Institute (OMRI) product list. These plots are approximately 20 ft by 40 ft. Select 20x20 ft. (approx) plots are available for beginning gardeners. The cost is \$80 per year per year-round plot (April-April), \$40 for seasonal organic plot (April-Oct.).

Gardeners are responsible for watering, weeding, pest control and harvesting of their plot.

Community Garden Rules are online for renters to review. With the rental of a plot, gardeners will receive an initial tilling of the soil and access to water. Rental fees help defray the costs of tilling, staking, providing water, administration and patrol by MetroParks rangers. No refunds are given. Gardens are open daily from 8am-10pm during the gardening season.

Are you interested in becoming more involved with Wegerzyn Gardens Foundation? Do you like planning and finding ways to connect people to Wegerzyn? Then consider joining the Foundation membership council. They meet monthly and review current benefits, create content for the newsletter, and work with Wegerzyn staff to create the member walks. For more information or to join the council email contact@wegerzyngardensfoundation.org.

American Horticulture Reciprocal Admissions

By India Clarke

Your Wegerzyn Gardens Foundation membership includes reciprocal privileges at the American Horticultural Society (AHS) participating gardens. When you travel, be sure to check the website and download the current Garden Network list (updated frequently) and plan your schedule.
<https://ahsgardening.org/ahs-garden-network/>

The AHS Garden Network includes nearly 400 gardens throughout the United States and North America, organized and administered by the American Horticultural Society. Since 1990, the network has granted hundreds of thousands of AHS and network garden members greater access to cultivated green spaces.

Participating gardens agree to offer free admission and other discounts to members of AHS and fellow network gardens' members. Please see directory listings for individual gardens' benefits and rules before planning your visit, or call your garden of interest before you plan your visit.

Please note:

- Most gardens with parking offer it for free to network visitors but check beforehand.
- Free admission does not include special events, like festivals or special exhibits.
- Some network gardens apply a visitor exception - meaning the garden offers benefits (such as free admission) only to visitors whose membership card address is more than 90 miles from the garden. Please check the AHS Garden Network map information and consult the garden(s) you wish to visit to see whether the local-visitor exception is applied.

When visiting a network garden, present your

current membership card (from AHS or a participating network garden like Wegerzyn Gardens Foundation) at the admissions counter or gift shop to receive the benefit(s) listed for that garden. Each card will only admit the individual(s) whose name is listed on the card. In the case of a family, couple or household membership card that does not list individual names, AHS requests that the garden honor the same number of people for free admission as the garden's equivalent membership card would for their own members.

Remember that the gardens you visit rely on admissions and donations to maintain their collections and gardens for all to enjoy. Please support them by visiting their gift shops or making a contribution.

Gardens are accepted into the network on a rolling basis and this garden list is frequently updated.

Newest Gardens Added:

- Hayes Arboretum - Richmond, IN
- Sunnylands Center & Gardens - Mirage, CA
- American Museum & Gardens Claverton Manor - United Kingdom
- Native Gardens - Blue Hill, ME
- Grandmothers' Garden - Westfield, MA
- Savannah Botanical Gardens - Savannah, Georgia
- Biodynamic Gardens at Three Springs - Bodega, CA
- McLaughlin Garden and Homestead - South Paris, ME
- Wood County Museum - Bowling Green, OH

Benjamin Wegerzyn Legacy Society

By Carol Self

The Benjamin Wegerzyn Legacy Society honors the thoughtful individuals who have chosen to include the Wegerzyn Gardens Foundation in their estate plans, ensuring that the beauty, education and natural experiences of Wegerzyn Gardens will continue to inspire future generations.

Established in 2009, the Legacy Society recognizes those whose planned gifts reflect a lasting commitment to the Foundation's mission. Today, more than 30 members have made this meaningful investment in the future. Regardless of the size of the gift, every legacy commitment helps preserve and enhance Wegerzyn Gardens for years to come.

There are many ways to create your legacy through the Wegerzyn Gardens Foundation, including:

- A bequest through your will or trust
- Naming the Foundation as a beneficiary of a life insurance policy
- Naming the Foundation as a beneficiary of a retirement account
- Establishing a charitable trust or charitable gift annuity

We encourage you to consult with your attorney, financial advisor or estate planning professional to determine the giving option that best reflects your personal and philanthropic goals.

If you have already included the Wegerzyn Gardens Foundation in your estate plans but have not yet told us, we would be grateful if you would let us know. Doing so allows us to thank you during your lifetime, recognize you as a member of the Benjamin Wegerzyn Legacy Society and ensures that we understand and honor your intentions.

For more information or to discuss a planned gift, please contact:

Alexis Larsen, CFRE
Chief of Philanthropy
Five Rivers MetroParks
(937) 274-4381
alexis.larsen@metroparks.org

All conversations and inquiries are held in the strictest confidence.

Legacy Society Members

Thank you to the following members for making Wegerzyn part of their legacy.

Dick Amann	Marlene McLefresh
Ronald and Louise* Bennett	Barbara O'Hara
Marcy Corrado	Charlotte Paugh
Beverly Friel*	Peg and Mel Peterson
Mary Geiger	Mary Pfander
Kery and Tim Gray	Burt and Alice Saidel
Lynne Hamilton	Carol and Mike Self
J Heilman*	Robert Siebenthaler
Anonymous*	Sandi Simmons
Bruce and Sue Howorth	and Tom Jonak
John Isreal	Casey and Amy Skapik
Chris Jensen	Casandra Strudwick
Pat Katcavage	Beth Young
John Kovach	
Ed Lehman and John Snyder	
Jane Lynch	
Jackie and Lyn McArdle	

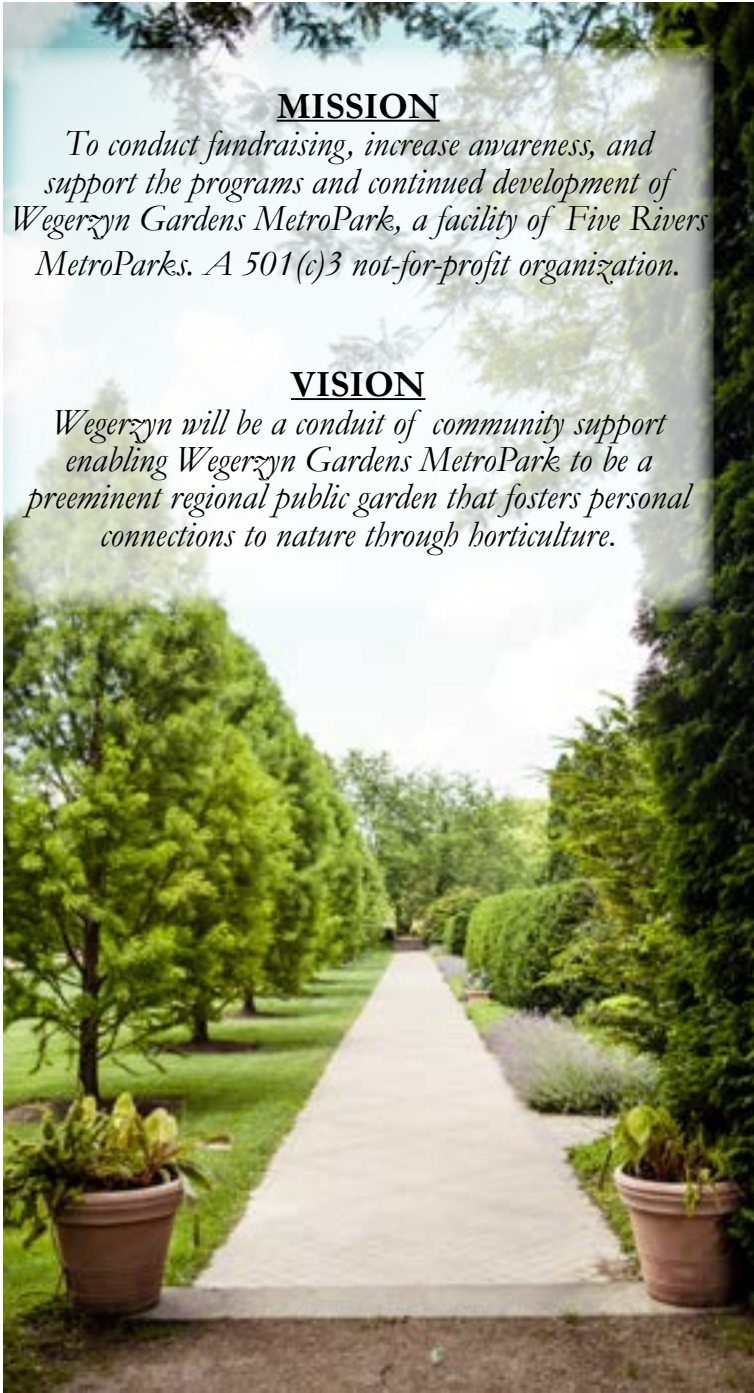


Children's Discovery Garden Seating & Tables

By Randy Ryberg

We'd like to thank the Wegerzyn Garden's Foundation for the generous funding support to purchase new furniture for the Children's Discovery Garden. Picnic tables with umbrellas provide a great place for families to take a break with much needed shade. Colorful Adirondack chairs at various locations provide a comfortable place to sit and a vibrant pop of color. A table and stools under the pergola is a great place to hang out and play a game of checkers. There are even children sized Adirondack chairs near the canoe for a great space for imaginary play.





MISSION

To conduct fundraising, increase awareness, and support the programs and continued development of Wegerzyn Gardens MetroPark, a facility of Five Rivers MetroParks. A 501(c)3 not-for-profit organization.

VISION

Wegerzyn will be a conduit of community support enabling Wegerzyn Gardens MetroPark to be a preeminent regional public garden that fosters personal connections to nature through horticulture.

**Wegerzyn Gardens Foundation
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MayFair Loretta Hill/Mary Gordon
Garden Party.....Libby Freeze/Rich Gillette

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**FOR QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, OR TO
GET INVOLVED**

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