

**Northern Plains  
Botanic Garden Society**



**2023  
Annual Report**

## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

Everything is happening perfectly.

Everything. Is happening. Perfectly.

This is a willful ethos, to be certain. I've dwelled on these four words in sequence often, these recent months and years. And with each reflection, new meaning emerges. Some days it even calls for a bit of stubbornness, simply to embrace it.

Why do some things feel harder today than yesterday? Ah, yes, it is because we seek strength, and strength emerges only by facing challenges, and choosing to willfully engage them.

Why is this obstacle here, seemingly in our way? Oh, right because it reveals the path forward. For if there were no resistance, we would not understand which direction to push.

Five short years ago, in NPBGS' 2019 Annual Report, Vern Hunter's message in this space articulated that, at the time, funds were not yet available to continue planning or construction of a Japanese garden, although optimistically (perhaps even stubbornly), we had the entrance, the designated land area, the vision, and critically, the obstacle (fundraising). Today, we proudly see this expansion actively taking shape, with phases of its construction continuing through 2024. We are so grateful for the support from our community, our donors, members, volunteers, and our partnerships to activate the plans for an ever more impressive array of gardens in this space! With continuing support, we'll remain committed to our mission; committed to seeing these gardens grow and offer the public a place to visit, connect, introspect, and quiet the mind.

*Everything is happening perfectly.*

Our organization finds itself at a significant junction in 2024. Having now celebrated 25 years in existence, and by way of our partnership with the Fargo Park District, we are setting our sights on even more impressive growth and expansion. Importantly, the Fargo Park District has identified the approximately 58-acre expanse of Yunker farm – an area surrounding our botanic gardens and spanning all the way from 28th Avenue north to 32nd Avenue north, as a strategic initiative with a master development plan unveiled in 2023. We look forward to every opportunity and every new partnership that will surely unfold as the vision is fine-tuned and implemented in the coming seasons.

I'll not hesitate to ask now, not only for your continuing support, but for your understanding as the time won't be far off when you'll be enjoying the new Japanese garden, while our garden staff, volunteers, and partners are embracing and picking up construction on the next big project!

*Gratitude, in advance, is the most powerful force in the Universe.*

We are grateful, in advance, for seeing our valued membership numbers grow and grow, as we continue to demonstrate both the benefits of what has been achieved here, alongside the need for continuing growth. Most especially the need and desire for botanic-inspired indoor spaces that could be accessible to our community year-round, in considering what we all endure through the colder months on these *northern plains*.

We are grateful in advance, to see our little, almost entirely volunteer-driven, non-profit's available funds double and then triple, to fill much needed budgets for existing and new projects alike, for increasing staffing needs, for events, physical and virtual tours, extension and outreach, and much more. We welcome – with open arms, vines, branches, and gates – all who align and connect with our vision and mission.

*Everything is happening perfectly, really though?*

I don't know if folks still go for "Sunday drives", but anyone who has driven or traveled through most any other parts of our small but sprawling metropolitan area, surely has noticed that properties are being developed or redeveloped at a breakneck pace. Just within walking distance of my own dwelling, multiple buildings have been or are being knocked down to make way for the foundations of even bigger buildings, with even more concrete. And I don't know about you, but every single time I witness this, every time I see concrete poured and new walls erected right about to the edge of the streets or property lines, I wince. No space is set aside for plants, gardens, or in many cases, even grass. "How are the people, who are presumably one day expected to occupy these places supposed to connect to the earth? And to smell the flowers, will they be reliant on commercial options and delivery services? Where will they need to go, just to *touch grass*?"

It feels daunting at times. Overshadowing, even. Perhaps it feels this way because it must – it must be perfect. It must be perfect because if life is anything, it is a sequence of ebbs and flows, of crests and troughs, contrasting experiences, and it all hangs in a delicate balance. So, you see, every time I see or hear about millions of dollars invested in another big urban development construction project, my next thought is wow, this is perfect, because it validates our mission and our stewardship to preserve and grow this always free-to-everyone, Northern Plains Botanic Garden.

These gardens are your gardens, and every membership, every donation, every volunteer, and every visitor who tells a friend or family member about us... is more important and more valuable than ever.

~ Thank you ~  
Matt Sorenson, President



## Northern Plains Botanic Garden Society

## Profit &amp; Loss

January through December 2023

	Jan - Dec 23
Ordinary Income/Expense	
Income	
43400 · Direct Public Support	
43420 · Foundation/Grants	7,000.00
43450 · Business Contributions	4,800.00
43470 · Annual Membership Dues	4,320.00
43480 · Memorials	825.00
43490 · Donations	17,857.00
43495 · Japanese Garden Fund	12,058.00
<b>Total 43400 · Direct Public Support</b>	<b>46,860.00</b>
45000 · Investments	
45030 · Interest-Savings, Short-term CD	1,615.95
<b>Total 45000 · Investments</b>	<b>1,615.95</b>
46400 · Other Types of Income	
46440 · Recycling	6.35
<b>Total 46400 · Other Types of Income</b>	<b>6.35</b>
47200 · Program Income	
47240 · West Acres Vendor Fees	8,150.00
47250 · Garden and Indoor Plant Design	3,500.00
47260 · West Acres Contract	10,500.00
47270 · Workshop Tuition	250.00
47300 · Events - Ticket Sales	200.00
47310 · Events - Revenue	
47310-1 · Non taxable Sales	3,752.50
47310-2 · Taxable Sales	8,831.00
<b>Total 47310 · Events - Revenue</b>	<b>12,583.50</b>
47320 · Events - Sponsorships	100.00
47330 · Events - Donations	1,132.25
<b>Total 47200 · Program Income</b>	<b>36,415.75</b>
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>84,898.05</b>
<b>Gross Profit</b>	<b>84,898.05</b>
Expense	
60900 · Business Expenses	
60950 · Dues & Subscriptions	270.00
<b>Total 60900 · Business Expenses</b>	<b>270.00</b>
62100 · Contract Services	
62110 · Accounting Fees	350.00
62150 · Outside Contract Services	29,172.20
<b>Total 62100 · Contract Services</b>	<b>29,522.20</b>
62800 · Facilities and Equipment	
62840 · Garden Equip Rent & Maint	4,830.72
62880 · Bldg Repairs & Maintenance	761.69
62890 · Rent, Parking, Utilities	3,896.14
<b>Total 62800 · Facilities and Equipment</b>	<b>9,488.55</b>
63000 · Information Technology	
63210 · Stripe	115.67
63220 · Square fee	175.70
63300 · Website	920.87
63400 · Hardware/Software	4,305.71
<b>Total 63000 · Information Technology</b>	<b>5,517.95</b>

## Northern Plains Botanic Garden Society

## Profit &amp; Loss

01/08/24

January through December 2023

Accrual Basis

	Jan - Dec 23
64000 · Program Expenses	
64100 · Events - Supplies	889.92
64150 · Events - Food	457.37
64175 · Events - Other Expenses	5,980.56
64200 · Public Relations & Advertising	30.99
64300 · West Acres Project Expenses	0.00
64400 · Gardening Expenses	6,273.09
64450 · Japanese Garden Expense	100,552.93
<b>Total 64000 · Program Expenses</b>	<b>114,184.86</b>
65000 · Operations	
65020 · Postage, Mailing Service	708.83
65030 · Printing and Copying	3,898.18
65040 · Supplies	283.22
<b>Total 65000 · Operations</b>	<b>4,890.23</b>
65100 · Other Types of Expenses	
65120 · Insurance - Liability, D and O	3,101.00
65130 · Signage	50.65
65160 · Other Costs	24.43
<b>Total 65100 · Other Types of Expenses</b>	<b>3,176.08</b>
<b>Total Expense</b>	<b>167,049.87</b>
<b>Net Ordinary Income</b>	<b>-82,151.82</b>
<b>Net Income</b>	<b>-82,151.82</b>

## Northern Plains Botanic Garden Society

## Balance Sheet

01/08/24

As of December 31, 2023

Accrual Basis

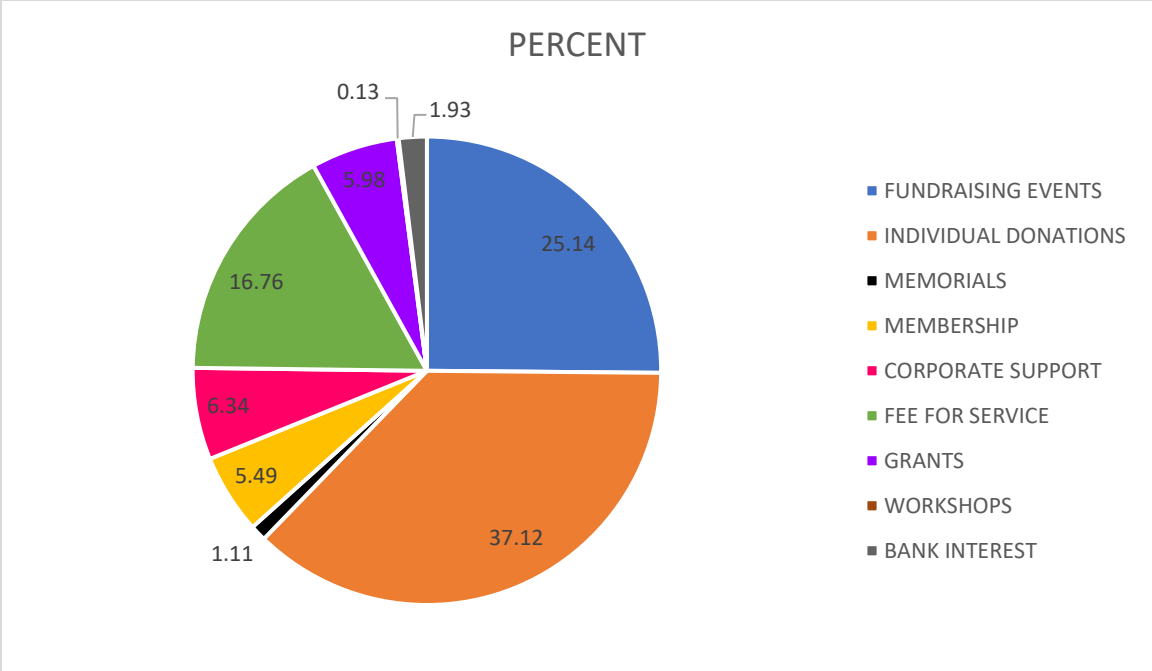
	<u>Dec 31, 23</u>
<b>ASSETS</b>	
<b>Current Assets</b>	
<b>Checking/Savings</b>	
11100 · Bell State Checking	25,036.86
11101 · Petty Cash	114.00
11200 · Bell State Money Market Savings	
11201 · Restricted Savings	
11220 · Japanese Garden Fund	<u>1,853.27</u>
<b>Total 11201 · Restricted Savings</b>	1,853.27
11210 · Savings Unrestricted	13,981.47
11200 · Bell State Money Market Savings - Other	<u>35,999.20</u>
<b>Total 11200 · Bell State Money Market Savings</b>	51,833.94
11300 · Martha Lee Mem. Fund, Alerus CD	<u>4,312.08</u>
<b>Total Checking/Savings</b>	<u>81,296.88</u>
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	81,296.88
<b>Fixed Assets</b>	
12120 · Depreciation	-10,518.00
15000 · Furniture and Equipment	<u>52,590.00</u>
<b>Total Fixed Assets</b>	<u>42,072.00</u>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b><u><u>123,368.88</u></u></b>
<b>LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>	
<b>Equity</b>	
30000 · Opening Balance Equity	-570.00
32000 · Unrestricted Net Assets	206,090.70
Net Income	<u>-82,151.82</u>
<b>Total Equity</b>	<u>123,368.88</u>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>	<b><u><u>123,368.88</u></u></b>

## FINANCE

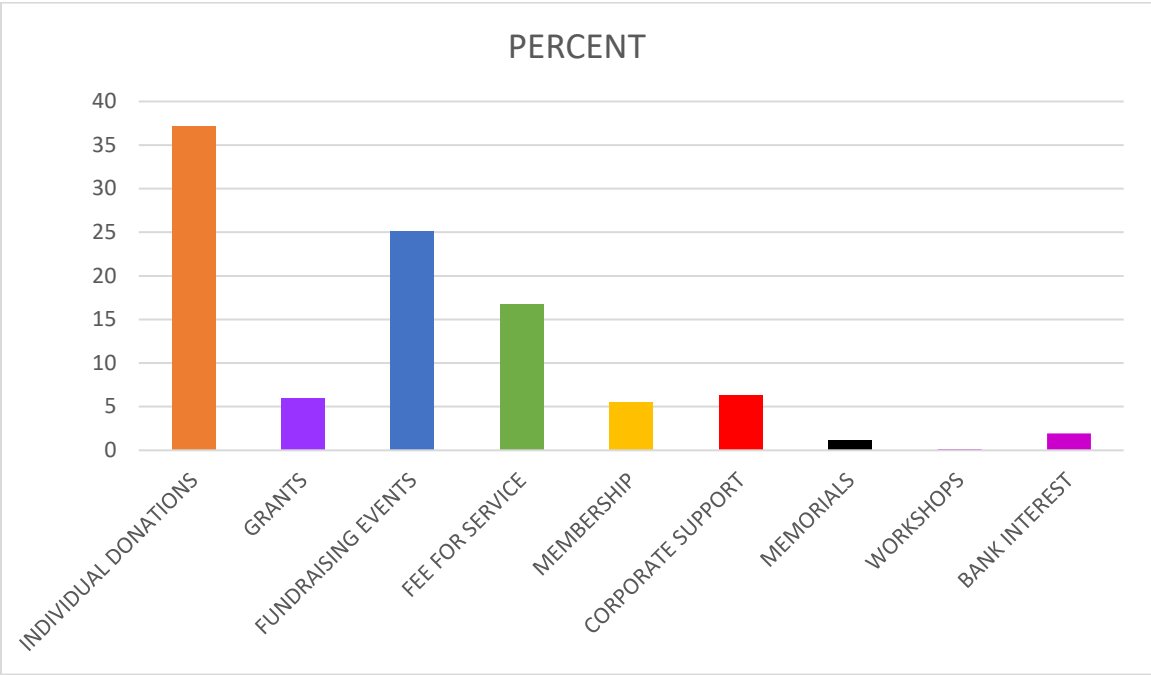
Our fundraising efforts this year included the *Spring Plant Sale* on May 13<sup>th</sup>, the *Scarecrows in the Garden* event on September 16<sup>th</sup>, the weekly Northern Plains Farmers Market at West Acres that is held annually from mid- June through October, and a Fall Fundraising Letter. We appealed for donor support via direct mail, social media, e-mails, and our Fall Newsletter. The West Acres Landscapes Contract and The Market at West Acres provide NPBGS with additional support income throughout the year. We thank everyone who contributed their time, talent, and treasure to NPBGS. Scarecrows in the Garden, Bonsai Workshop fees, and one funded grant were allocated for the Japanese Garden Fund. This list summarizes our 2023 income sources.

	Net Dollars
<b>Fundraising Events:</b>	
<i>Spring Plant Sale</i>	5,719.76
<i>West Acres Market Vendor Booth Fees</i>	8,150.00
<i>The Market at West Acres: NPBGS Booth Sales</i>	3,555.03
<i>Scarecrows in the Garden</i>	3,579.98
<b>Total Net Dollars, Fundraising Events:</b>	<b>21,004.71</b>
<b>Bonsai Workshop:</b>	<b>110.27</b>
<b>Individual Donations:</b>	
Individual Donations, 48 donations:	18,657.00
Individual Donations, Japanese Garden Campaign, 45 donations:	12,358.00
<b>Total Individual Donations, Direct Solicitations:</b>	<b>31,015.00</b>
<b>Memorial Donations:</b> 17 donations	<b>925.00</b>
<b>Memberships:</b> 92 New or Renewing Membership payments <i>118 Current Members plus 11 Lifetime Members = 129 Members</i>	<b>4,590.00</b>
<b>Corporate Support:</b>	
West Acres Development, LLC: <i>General Operating Support</i>	2,500.00
Bell Bank: <i>Edible Forest Project</i>	2,000.00
Microsoft Corporation: <i>Employee Match Program</i>	800.00
<b>Total Corporate Support:</b>	<b>5,300.00</b>
<b>West Acres Landscapes Project Fee for Service Contract:</b>	<b>14,000.00</b>
<b>Grants:</b>	
FM Area Foundation, general operating support	3,000.00
Cass County Electric Cooperative Foundation, Japanese Garden support	1,000.00
West Fargo High School Philanthropy & Youth, Mum Pathways Project	500.00
North Fargo High School Philanthropy & Youth, Mum Pathways Project	500.00
<b>Total Grant Support</b>	<b>5,000.00</b>

**Grant Proposals Denied Funding:** RDO Caters Taters, Midco Foundation, and Gate City Bank



### NPBGs FUNDING INCOME IN 2023





## GARDEN AND OPERATIONS



Work began at the Northern Plains Botanic Garden on April 10<sup>th</sup> despite the deep snow. Our contract gardeners plus one volunteer had to shovel snow to navigate pathways and to find the potted plants that had been saved for the Spring Plant Sale.

The mulched paths in the **Chrysanthemum Garden** were upgraded with crushed aggregate to match adjoining pathways and to improve accessibility. An additional path on the west side of this garden was added. At the same time, some connecting paths were added to make our path system continuous throughout the garden and some pathways in the Children's Garden and Edible Forest were refurbished.

The **Phase 2 of the Japanese Garden** was completed on schedule. This included earth moving, construction of pathways, irrigation, and turf grass. It was a \$92,000 project funded by capital campaign donations, a \$15,000 grant from the FM Convention and Visitors Bureau, and a \$1,000 grant from Cass County Electric Cooperative Foundation. The budget shortfall was covered by NPBGS general funds. More detail about this project can be seen in the [2023 Fall Newsletter](#), and a great aerial view can be seen via our online [Virtual Garden Tour](#).



### ESTIMATED PATH DISTANCES

### NORTHERN PLAINS BOTANIC GARDEN

#### PATHWAY

	<u>FEET</u>	<u>MILES</u>
West GH Door --> Woodland Garden	290	0.055
Woodland Garden Loop	252	0.048
Woodland Patio --> Japanese Garden Gate	191	0.036
JG North side of Gate -> JG Outer Loop	772	0.146
JG Southern Cross Path (E --> W)	146	0.028
JG Western Midcross Path (S-->N)	123	0.023
JG Middle Midcross Path	104	0.019
JG Gazebo View -->NW to North Path	161	0.03
GH Steps --> Edible Forest Gate	81	0.015
EF Gate --> Edible Forest Loop Trail	597	0.113
Children's Garden: A --> Z	248	0.047
Children's Garden Inner Sensory Loop	238	0.045
Children's Garden A Gate --> West GH Door	359	0.068
Chrysanthemum Garden Loop	179	0.034
Chrysanthemum Garden E--> W Path	60	0.011
Chrysanthemum Garden: Living Fence Bench --> Main	32	0.006
Chrysanthemum Garden: Grapevine --> Animal Shelter Shed	33	0.006
Wisteria Bench --> GH Steps	70.5	0.013
<b>TOTAL MEASURED</b>		<b>0.743</b>

Measurements done via a walking wheel pedometer and are rough estimates  
Measurements taken in the center of pathways, October 2023  
Measurements done by Lisa Brown

After all pathways were completed, an unofficial pathway distance survey was done which indicates that there are now almost 0.75 miles of paths and walkways around the botanic garden (see table).



Structures and outdoor furniture were repainted, and new raised beds were constructed near the **Children's Garden** to replace the deteriorating wooden ones. The old wooden raised beds were placed near the shed and were repurposed for overwintering potted perennials.

More plants were added to several gardens including Prairie Smoke (*Geum triflorum*), Beardtongue (*Penstemon*), Blue Sage (*Salvia azurea* var. *grandiflora*), and Smooth Blue Aster (*Symphyotrichum laeve*) in the pollinator patches. Turtlehead (*Chelone*), and Prairie Smoke were added to the **Rain Garden**. Also, a declining Ohio Buckeye was replaced (*Aesculus glabra*), and some dogwood (*Cornus sericea* 'Bergeson Compact') was planted along the north edge of the **Woodland Garden**.



The concord grape vines along the hummingbird patio pergola were monitored for *Phylloxera* populations, and IPM measures were taken to control the aphid-like insect through early season application of Surround<sup>R</sup> WP, a Kaolin clay compound, as well as via stem pruning in the fall.

### Edible Forest Update

2023 was the 4<sup>th</sup> growing season for most of the plants in the Edible Forest. It is growing in beauty, due to the plants getting larger and to the excellent grounds-keeping by staff and volunteers. Visitors are very common, and there is a lot of fruit sampling (sampling encouraged, harvesting is only for staff for NPBGS support sales at the Farmer's Market). Fruit production is on the increase, with aronia berries, black currants,

honeyberries, seedless grapes, and raspberries being most productive in 2023. To mention some others, the blueberries in the raised bed are coming into production, and the first mulberries were produced. Voles caused much damage in our region last winter, and there was some damage in the Edible Forest, especially to an apricot and peach tree. The only other substantial issue was that wasps and hornets severely damaged the seedless grape crop. Several new and replacement plants were added, notably including







Prime-Ark Freedom blackberry and Cornelian cherries.

Top-work grafting of additional cultivars was demonstrated on the base crabapple and pear trees. Shaping began on an apple tree planted to demonstrate espalier pruning. A top-work grafting demonstration and grape pruning demonstration are planned for 2024, as are monthly (at least) public and private guided tours of the Edible Forest. See our [Edible Forest Update for 2023 Report](#) for more information about upcoming plans for the Edible Forest.

The grapevines and various shrubs and vines in the Edible Forest produced ample amounts of fruit for jelly and juice to sell at the West Acres market, as well as at our own events. We thank Don DuBord and Lou Worner for volunteering to harvest and process the fruit. Also, Lou Worner harvested

flowers and created many bouquets from the Children's Garden and the raised beds, which were sold at the market.

2023 was a very successful gardening year, thanks to all the work done by our contract gardeners and our volunteers. We were pleased to see more people exploring the gardens this past year. As the gardens grow more beautiful, we expect that more people will visit to enjoy the displays of color, the peaceful atmosphere, and the fun provided by the Northern Plains Botanic Garden.





## PROGRAMS AND EVENTS

### Public Events



NPBGS hosted its annual *Hina Matsuri* (Japanese Doll Festival) display at the Rourke Art Gallery + Museum from February 3<sup>rd</sup> – March 12<sup>th</sup>. The Japanese dolls were displayed on the second floor, along with models of the future Japanese Garden of Mind and Soul, and of the Pavilion building, as envisioned by architect Vern Hunter. A kimono and Japanese screen of the Edo Period, evoking a Sukiya living style, enhanced the display. We thank Vern Hunter for developing the display, and Maurice Degrugillier who assisted in setting up the display, which was available for viewing during the Annual Meeting.

(Aiko Hatano, Japan Outreach Coordinator, Mayville State University, previews Hina Dolls, 2/25/23)

Our 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting was held at the Rourke Art Gallery + Museum on March 7<sup>th</sup>. Attendees were able to view the Hina Matsuri display and ask questions of docent Minami Iizuka Klinkhammer about the dolls and their cultural significance. Sarah Coomber opened the meeting with a koto performance, and keynote speaker



Sadafumi Uchiyama, curator of the Portland Japanese Garden, gave a presentation about the history, development, and significance of Japanese Gardens, with the message that Japanese Gardens have great potential as places for diplomacy, harmony, and fostering peaceful relations. He showed numerous photos about the development of the Portland Japanese Garden.

(S. Uchiyama, waiting to give keynote)

Refreshments were coordinated by Joyce Pettinger, and special 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary cookies were created by Cynthia Herfindahl.

Approximately 100 people, including specially invited guests, attended (see Annual Meeting Minutes at the end of this report).



The first *Bonsai in the Garden* event was held at the Northern Plains Botanic Garden on September 9<sup>th</sup>. The public was invited to tour the completed Phase 2 pathways and hills north of



(Bonsai, Nana Juniper)

the Japanese Gate, enjoy refreshments (coffee, tea, donuts), and learn more about the Japanese Garden. Audrey Gilbraith gave a presentation on [\*Bonsai for Artists and Gardeners\*](#) on the greenhouse patio which was followed by a hands-on bonsai workshop in the greenhouse for 10 workshop registrants. Approximately 25 people attended the tour and presentation. We thank Vern Hunter for organizing this inaugural event and for providing refreshments.



(Audrey Gilbraith)

We celebrated our 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of NPBGS' incorporation as an organization on October 8<sup>th</sup> with a *25th Anniversary Celebration and Open House* at the NPBGS Greenhouse. Refreshments included fruit, veggie, and charcuterie trays, caprese kebabs, and an anniversary cake. Approximately 50 people attended, socialized, and toured the fall foliage of the botanic garden. Lisa Brown provided the refreshments and coordinated this open house.



### Fundraising Events

Our annual *Spring Plant Sale* was held on May 13<sup>th</sup>. A diverse offering of flowering annuals, perennials, vegetable plants, and herbs were offered for sale and totaled 227 varieties. NPBGS' Spring Plant Sale offers the public an additional shopping venue in north Fargo for seasonal plants, with experienced volunteers who provide useful gardening tips to the buyers. We thank Don DuBord, who organized and coordinated the plant sale, and the numerous volunteers and plant donors.



(Shoppers at Spring Plant Sale, NPBGS Greenhouse)



Our third annual *Scarecrows in the Garden & Fall Market* event was held on September 16<sup>th</sup>. Twenty custom crafted scarecrows were created and donated for display and sale at the Northern Plains Botanic Garden. The Fall Market included numerous donated baked goods, jams, plants, seasonal fall décor, handcrafts, and pumpkins donated by [Driscoll Farms](#). Attendees were able to purchase lunch from the [Heart -n- Soul Community Café](#) food truck and tour the botanic garden. Kids were able to create sidewalk chalk art, participate in an Orphan Scarecrow Doll scavenger hunt, and play a “Go Fish!” game. Approximately 200 people attended this fun public event. Joyce Pettinger and Cynthia Herfindahl were the event coordinators.



(DiAnn & Vern Hunter, created ghosts)

### Tours & Outreach

Two public Edible Forest Tours were given by Jim Walla on July 19<sup>th</sup>, which had 25 participants. Also, Jim Walla gave informal tours of the Edible Forest, and answered questions of visitors, during the Sept. 16<sup>th</sup> Scarecrows in the Garden public event.



The [Brooks Harbor YMCA](#) youth group from West Fargo, ND toured the botanic garden on July 24<sup>th</sup>. The 38 kids (ages 7 – 11) and 4 adults enjoyed their free tour and their packed picnic lunches.

NPBGS hosted the [Prairie Rose Garden Club](#), from Jamestown, ND, on July 15<sup>th</sup> at the botanic garden. Lisa Brown gave a tour for the 8 visitors.

(Prairie Rose Garden Club Tour)

We hosted our 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Fall Frost Flower Harvest for [Hope Blooms](#) on October 9<sup>th</sup>. Ten Hope Blooms volunteers enjoyed visiting the botanic garden. They harvested annual and perennial flowers for use in their small bouquets of re-purposed flowers that they create and give to those in our community in need of kindness, hope, and comfort.

(Hope Blooms)





## Kids Events



NPBGS hosted the metro area Home School Group on May 16<sup>th</sup>. A *Make Your Own Seed Tape* activity was held in the NPBGS Greenhouse, which was followed by a play tour of the Children’s Garden. Kids and their parents enjoyed their own picnic lunch at the Hummingbird Patio. Participants included 32 grade school kids plus 9 parents. Lisa Brown coordinated the activity and tour.

## Publication

NPBGS developed a new booklet, [Pollinator Plants at the Northern Plains Botanic Garden](#), which lists species of beneficial pollinator plants at the Northern Plains Botanic Garden, plus useful online resources with information about pollinator plants and plant information resources. Lisa Brown and Ruth Morton collaborated on developing this brochure.

(Monarch on *Liatris* in Rain Garden, 2022)



## PUBLIC RELATIONS

### Community Outreach Booths



NPBGS participated in Fargo Park District’s *Hello, Spring!* annual spring festival at Rheault Farm on May 20<sup>th</sup> with a promotional activity booth. Kids and adults played with the tabletop Zen Gardens, and kids were given pollinator connect-a-dot coloring pages. Booth coordinator Joyce Pettinger & volunteer Mary Leff greeted booth visitors.

(Joyce Pettinger, *Hello Spring!* Booth)

*Pollinator Party*, a community open house at Baker Garden & Gift, was held on June 21<sup>st</sup>. NPBGS provided an information booth where we distributed our new booklet, “Pollinator Plants at the Northern Plains Botanic Garden”, plus promotional literature about NPBGS, the Northern

Plains Botanic Garden, and the future Japanese Garden. Lisa Brown and Vern Hunter networked at this open house event which included Audubon Great Plains, NDSU Extension Service Horticulture & Forestry, and Growing Together Community Gardens.



NPBGS participated in 16 of the 19 Saturday market days at the [Northern Plains Market at West Acres](#), a seasonal farmers market at West Acres. In addition to our booth sales, we promoted the market, NPBGS membership, the botanic garden, the Japanese Garden, and upcoming NPBGS events. Lou Worner, Lisa Brown, and Don DuBord helped with this hybrid fundraising and promotional effort.

### Red River Valley Garden Tour

NPBGS partnered with [Baker Garden & Gift](#) and the [NDSU Master Gardeners](#) to organize and co-sponsor the inaugural [Red River Valley Garden Tour](#), a tour of six home gardens in the Fargo-Moorhead metro area, on July 19<sup>th</sup> & July 20<sup>th</sup>. [Growing Together Community Gardens](#) was the beneficiary non-profit organization which received the net proceeds from the 300 tickets sold. NPBGS paid for the cost of the 8 yard signs and 300 printed tour pamphlets. The 2024 tour will be expanded to 1000 ticket capacity. Lisa Brown represents NPBGS on the RRVGT Committee.

### Public Speaking Engagements

Vern Hunter gave a brief presentation about the Northern Plains Botanic Garden, NPBGS, and the Japanese Garden, to Dr. Chiwon Lee's horticulture class at NDSU on September 22<sup>nd</sup>.

### Press Conference

NPBGS hosted a press conference on March 6<sup>th</sup> at the West Acres' Community Corner. Media Packets were created by Lisa Brown, and Vern Hunter gave background information about NPBGS, the Northern Plains Botanic Garden, and he introduced Sadafumi Uchiyama as the builder of the Japanese Garden of Mind and Soul. Mr. Uchiyama spoke about his background experience as a Japanese garden builder, landscape architect, and as the curator of the [Portland Japanese Garden](#). Also, the 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of NPBGS was announced.

The only media to attend were a photographer, Alyssa Goelzer, and a reporter, [C.S. Hagen](#), from The Forum. [Plans for Japanese garden at Yunker Farm Park take shape under expert's guidance](#) was the March 6<sup>th</sup> article that was written by Mr. Hagen and published in The Forum.

(article by C. S. Hagen on front page of The Forum, 7 March 2023)





## Website

We enhanced the [Press Center](#) webpage with information about NPBGS, the Japanese Garden construction project, links to NPBGS publications, plus QR codes for the [Edible Forest Guide](#) and the Virtual Garden Tour. This proved to be a useful resource for those who attended our March 6<sup>th</sup> press Conference.

## Virtual Garden Tour

Our [Virtual Garden Tour](#), created by [Be More Colorful](#), was updated in the fall via drone and 360° photography with additional aerial views and website links. This has been shared widely on social media. We expect to utilize this tour, via QR link and virtual reality headset, at various public events in the coming year. Matt Sorenson and Barbara Villella coordinated with Be More Colorful to facilitate production of the virtual tour.

## Public Communications Plan

We developed an integrated communications plan on June 9<sup>th</sup>, at the request of the Fargo Park District, for notifying the public and nearby neighbors about the status of the Japanese Garden Phase 2 Construction project. Neighbors on the west side of 10<sup>th</sup> Street N (2800 → 2900 blocks) were canvassed with an information sheet about the project, including web address and QR code to the [Japanese Garden Construction](#) webpage. Signs were posted on the greenhouse door, and yard signs with the QR code for the webpage were posted in strategic areas near public walkways and near the construction site. This was done to keep the public informed and to encourage the public to contact NPBGS, and not the Fargo Park District, about any public concerns. We received no complaints or major concerns from the public, aside from one question about how construction might impact neighboring properties in terms of water runoff and flow.



We assured the neighbor that we were following our engineered stormwater retention and erosion control plan, developed by [MBN Engineering](#), which had been approved by the City of Fargo and the Fargo Park District.

(Phase 2 Construction yard sign)

(Below: Japanese Garden Phase 2, August 14, 2023)



## MEMBERSHIP

NPBGS has struggled to retain, sustain, and gain members each year. Over the past five years we have seen a gradual increase in our total members, but the majority of members lapse in paying annual membership dues (see table, *Membership: 2019 – 2023*). The past three years show that NPBGS has an average of 130 paid members per year (new, renewing, and lifetime memberships, combined).

Botanic Gardens and similar public institutions rely on membership support to sustain them for general operations – to pay for what is needed to stay “open” to the public. Our challenge is to increase our membership while also ensuring that we have fewer members lapse in their annual membership dues.

Programs, public outreach, and social engagement: expansion and enhancement of these activities will be key to growing NPBGS’ Membership and increasing membership renewals. NPBGS will continue to explore the future hiring of professional staff who can help grow and sustain our organization.

Prospective members can join NPBGS via our website [membership portal](#).



## Affiliations

### NPBGS is a Member Organization with the following:

North Dakota Association of Nonprofit Organizations (NDANO; [www.ndano.org](http://www.ndano.org) )

North Dakota Nursery, Greenhouse & Landscape Association (NDNGLA; [www.ndngla.com](http://www.ndngla.com) )

American Public Gardens Association ([www.publicgardens.org](http://www.publicgardens.org) )

The Arts Partnership (<https://theartspartnership.net>)

## VOLUNTEERS

NPBGS is driven through volunteer energy and initiative. All of our work would not exist without the dedicated efforts of our volunteers! Volunteers help with gardening, operational and administrative support, public relations, programs and events, finance, and membership. Also, our Board of Directors is served by volunteers who are members. Prospective volunteers are encouraged to complete a [volunteer interest form](#) online.

In addition to the numerous NPBGS volunteer efforts previously mentioned in this report, much of our volunteer energy is focused on the development and maintenance of the Northern Plains Botanic Garden. Also, NPBGS volunteers provide plant scape services to West Acres Shopping Center as part of a fee for service contract which provides funds to help support NPBGS' [mission](#).



To celebrate our volunteers, NPBGS hosted a Volunteer Appreciation Social at the greenhouse and patio on June 1<sup>st</sup>, which was attended by 16 people. Ann Riley and Ruth Morton coordinated this fun social party.

We strived to reach out to prospective volunteers with two Volunteer Information and Social events on June 15<sup>th</sup> and June 20<sup>th</sup>, which resulted in very few attendees. Those who came enjoyed the root beer floats. Better planning and notification of volunteer outreach events will increase volunteer engagement.

NPBGS was fortunate to have two large volunteer groups this past year. Amazon provided two groups of volunteers,



12 total, on May 2<sup>nd</sup> and May 4<sup>th</sup>. They assisted with spring cleanup, especially raking, of the botanic garden.



Concordia College's Hands for Change provided 22 volunteers on August 21<sup>st</sup>. These volunteers weeded, dug up sod for two new beds, and painted signposts and wood beams.





# **NPBGS COMMITTEES IN 2023**

## **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

Matt Sorenson, Interim President; Teresa Jesten, Secretary; Ruth Morton, Treasurer

## **FINANCE COMMITTEE**

Lisa Brown and Ruth Morton

## **GARDEN AND OPERATIONS COMMITTEE**

Ruth Morton, Chair; Lisa Brown, Don DuBord, Vern Hunter, Jim Walla, Lou Worner

## **ARBORETUM (Ad hoc, Garden and Operations Committee)**

Jim Walla, Vern Hunter, Maurice Degrugillier, Don DuBord

## **JAPANESE GARDEN (Ad hoc, Garden and Operations, Finance, and Programs)**

Vern Hunter, Chair; Lisa Brown, Elly Heinz, Cynthia Herfindahl, Joyce Pettinger

## **SPRING PLANT SALE (Ad Hoc, Garden and Finance Committees)**

Don DuBord, Chair; Lisa Brown, Maurice Degrugillier, Ruth Morton, Lou Worner, Gail Wanek

## **TEA TIME WITH FLOWERS (Ad hoc, Program and Events)**

Ann Riley, Chair; Lisa Brown, Ruth Morton, Joyce Pettinger, Susan Poitras

## **SCARECROWS IN THE GARDEN (Ad hoc, Program and Events)**

Joyce Pettinger & Cynthia Herfindahl, Co-Chairs; Lisa Brown, Marissa Gapp, Elly Heinz, Vern Hunter

## **MEMBERSHIP/VOLUNTEER/NOMINATING COMMITTEE**

Ann Riley, Chair; Jackie Jones, Darlene Rogers

## **PROGRAM AND EVENTS COMMITTEE**

Lisa Brown, Marissa Gapp, Elly Heinz, Cynthia Herfindahl, Joyce Pettinger, Denise Quick

## **PUBLIC RELATIONS COMMITTEE**

Matt Sorenson, Chair; Lisa Brown, Marissa Gapp, Barbara Villella

*NPBGS thrives through the support of its volunteers. New members for our committees are very much welcome! For Volunteer Inquiries, Contact: [info@npbotanicgarden.com](mailto:info@npbotanicgarden.com) or signup via our website: <https://www.npbgs.org/volunteer>.*

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS IN 2023

Matt Sorenson, Interim President (2019 – 2022; 2022 – 2025; elected Vice President, 2023)

Teresa Jesten, Secretary (2020 – 2022; elected Secretary, 2020; 2022 - 2025)

Ruth Morton, Treasurer (2009 – 2014; 2018 – 2021; 2021 - 2024) \*

Mary Beyer (2020 – 2023; 2023 - 2024)\*\*

Marissa Gapp (2020 – 2021; 2021 - 2024)

Conrad Klinkhammer (2023 – 2026)

Barbara Vilella (2019 – 2022; 2022 – 2025)

Board Terms Ending in March 2023:

Jerry Raguse, President (2018 – 2021; elected President, 2020; 2021 - 8 July 2023)<sup>+</sup>

Joshua Cook, Vice President (2020 – 2023; elected Vice President, 2020)

Ann Riley (2001 – 2007; 2018 – 2020; 2020 - 2023)

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\*Treasurer Departed Board at term end in March; rejoined Board Mid-Year, 2021; elected Treasurer at the March 2022 Board Meeting.

<sup>+</sup> President resigned on 8 July 2023; Vice President assumed role as Interim President.

\*\*Board Member agreed to serve a one-year term through March 2024.

Board Members are elected by the Membership in March at the Annual Meeting.  
Officers are Board-elected. Vacant Seats not filled through the election can be Board-appointed.

**NORTHERN PLAINS BOTANIC GARDEN SOCIETY**  
**P. O. BOX 3031 FARGO, NORTH DAKOTA 58108-3031**  
[info@npbotanicgarden.com](mailto:info@npbotanicgarden.com) \* [www.npbgs.org](http://www.npbgs.org)

*Civitati Faventes Horti*  
*The Mission of the Northern Plains Botanic Garden Society is*  
*to establish a botanic garden, conservatory, and arboretum in the Fargo-Moorhead area.*  
*...Promoting Community through Gardening Since 1998...*

**MINUTES of the 2023 ANNUAL MEETING**  
**NORTHERN PLAINS BOTANIC GARDEN SOCIETY**  
**7 March 2023**  
**Rourke Art Gallery & Museum, Moorhead, MN**

President Jerry Raguse welcomed guests and members in attendance and introduced Vern Hunter. Vern Hunter introduced Sarah Coomber who played the Koto and shared excerpts from her book “The Same Moon: A Memoir”. Vern Hunter introduced Sadafumi Uchiyama the Chief Curator and Director of Portland Japanese Garden. He shared pictures and information about Japanese design with a focus on the Portland Japanese Garden. After the presentation, there was a break for refreshments, socializing, and viewing the Hina Doll display in the upstairs gallery.

President Jerry Raguse called the business portion of the annual meeting to order at 8:36 p.m.

**2022 Annual Report** The [2022 Annual Report](#) is available on the Society’s website. Also, a printed copy of the report was available for meeting attendees.

**2022 Annual Meeting Minutes**

Minutes from the March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022 Annual meeting were reviewed. No changes or additions were recommended. A motion was made by Ann Riley that they be approved as written. The motion was seconded by Kris Schipper, all were in favor.

**Treasurer’s Report**

Ruth Morton, Treasurer, presented the 2022 Income and Expense statement. A motion was made by Ann Riley to approve the financial report as presented. The motion was seconded by Mary Beyer with all in favor.

**President Recap**

Jerry Raguse president reminded everyone the annual report is available on the website and thanked Lisa Brown for all her hard work gathering and assembling the information for the annual report. Jerry asked all those present to stand if they have served on the board or volunteered with the Gardens to be recognized. He also encouraged all who are interested in volunteering to join a committee or be a part of the board as volunteers make the gardens work. He discussed the master plan for our area of the park and asked for ideas and input.

**Recognition of Departing Board Members**

Teresa Jesten recognized Joshua Cook who is leaving his position as Vice President before his term expires. Joshua and Audrey are new parents to twin girls as well as owning their own landscaping business and Joshua feels it necessary to step down at this time. Teresa expressed thanks to Joshua for serving as Vice President. NPBGS appreciates his time, ideas, and his continued support for the growth of the gardens.

Teresa Jesten also recognized Ann Riley as her term on the board expires March 2023. Ann will continue to be involved in many activities of the Society as time permits. Ann was thanked for her

many years of service on the board.

Mary Beyer's term on the board also expires March 2023. However, Mary is willing to remain on the board until a replacement has been found for her position. Mary was thanked for her flexibility and willingness to stay on the board at this time. NPBGS will seek board members in the near future.

### **Call for Nominations**

Board nominations and elections were made by Teresa Jesten. There was one name on the ballot, Conrad Klinkhammer, whose nomination was approved. Teresa Jesten made a call for nominations from the floor 3 times. There being no nominations made, the nominations ceased. With only one name on the ballot there was no need for voting. Conrad was welcomed to the Northern Plains Botanic Garden Society's Board of Directors.

### **Awards**

Vern Hunter and Lisa Brown each received Certificates of Appreciation for all their hard work and dedication to the Society. Ann Riley thanked both Lisa and Vern and presented them with a framed Certificate of Appreciation. They have put in many hours behind the scenes for the organization and for the Northern Plains Botanic Garden.

### **Open Discussion**

Jerry Raguse opened the meeting up to discussion, questions, and suggestions. Ann Riley reminded everyone of the Hina Doll exhibit on display at the Rourke Museum until Sunday March 12th, 2023. She also mentioned that the Spring Plant Sale will be held on May 13<sup>th</sup>, 8 a.m. - 1 p.m., at the NPBGS Greenhouse. It was also mentioned that the monthly board meeting will be Thursday March 9<sup>th</sup> via zoom and will be open to the public.

### **Adjourn**

There being no further business a motion to close the business meeting was made by Mary Beyer and seconded by Brandi Malarkey. The meeting concluded at 9:05 p.m.

The following members were known to have attended the business meeting. This is not a complete list:

Jerry Raguse, President; Teresa Jesten, Secretary; Ruth Morton, Treasurer; Directors Ann Riley, Marissa Gapp, and Mary Beyer; NPBGS Members: Vern and DiAnn Hunter, Conrad and Minami Klinkhammer, Lisa Brown, Cynthia Herfindahl, Joyce Pettinger, Jane and Tim Pettinger, Ann Braaten, Gail Wanek, Linda Worner, Elly Heinz, Dan and Nancy Johnson, Carolyn Monzingo, Ron Ellingson, John Peterson, Shirley McCaslin, Shaun and Kris Schipper, Felicia Cooper, Denise Quick, Don DuBord, Bill Fradet, Jim Walla, Mary Leff, Emily Hilgers, Kathy Neugebauer, Thomas Reiffenberger, Brandi Malarkey, Chiwon Lee, Larry Fischer, Tom Tolman, David and Darlene Rogers, Linda Anderson, Davis Scott, James Hogness, and Tom Riley.

Submitted by Teresa Jesten, Secretary