

THE CHRISTOPHER FARM & GARDENS

GROW-ZONE

A Quarterly Journal Review of our Seasons

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AUGUST- OCTOBER 2023



NEW & NOTEWORTHY

Summer beautifully transitioned into fall this year! The Autumn Blaze Maple trees turned a stunning red color all around the gardens. They added a striking, leafy frame around our new Orchard silo's CFG logo, as seen in the photo above.

Our Farm House Manager & Artist, Kari Below, crafted this Scarecrow Chicken, seen in the middle right photo. This "Mother Hen" masterpiece won first place in the "Landscape and Gardens" category at the Scarecrow Festival, a fundraiser for Sheboygan County's YMCA Camp Y-Koda, which was held on October 7th and 8th.



Floral Fall Decor

The bold colors of our Fall Chrysanthemums, or "Mums", can be seen in the photograph to the far right, as their blossoms began to open at the end of September. These were placed in strategic locations around the gardens, to be enjoyed by visiting guests and family members.

Garden mums like these do well in cool temperatures and will continue blooming well into the fall season. Mums can be overwintered to be enjoyed next year; here are some helpful tips! Planting mums in the ground early in the growing season will help them establish adequate root growth. Deadheading spent blooms encourages new ones to flourish. Insulate them for colder weather by spreading a couple of inches of mulch over the beds, but be sure to remove it in late winter, so you don't inhibit the plant's springtime growth!

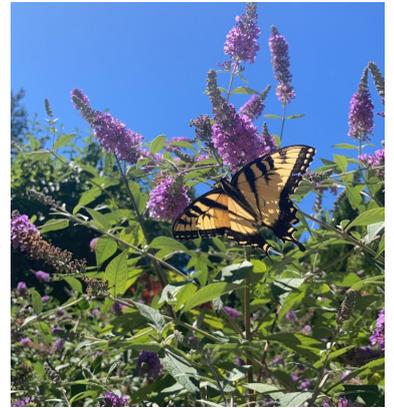


Summer Fades to Fall



The late summer rains that we finally received in July and into August really made the flowers pop in our Lake Michigan meadow. You can see here, in the photo on the left, the Pink Coneflowers dominating the landscape with their vivid colors.

August certainly was the month of butterflies, as we saw many species digging into the flowers around the gardens, like this Yellow Swallowtail butterfly sipping nectar from this purple Butterfly Bush, pictured below.

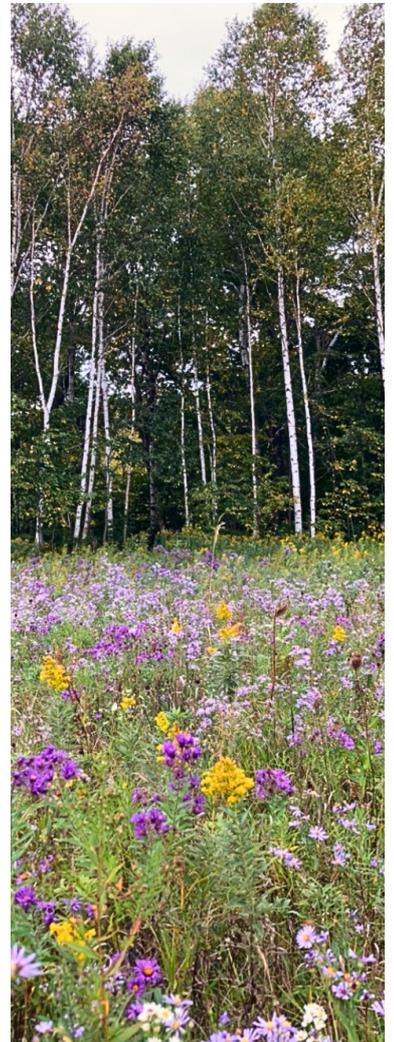


Seasonal Color Schemes

The Pink Coneflowers of summer eventually gave way to the stark yellow of the tall and gangly Sawtooth Sunflowers (middle left photo) which were enjoyed by pollinators and visitors alike. Our local pollinators had another menu change when the fall flowers began to bloom, like the deep purple New England Asters (middle photo) that you can see a Monarch Butterfly lounging upon. This butterfly was likely making a pit stop here in our prairie while on its route south to Mexico.

Although we live in an area teeming with Green Bay Packer fans, the prairies take on a very “Viking-esque” color blend in fall, due to the various species of yellow Goldenrod and purple Aster flowers coming into bloom. The image to the right shows a great view of this beautiful color combination, taken in late September along the path towards the Jumes Woods conservation land.

Fall blooming plants, like these Goldenrods and Asters, provide a necessary source of nectar for many insects as they prepare for winter. Though some species of flowers have completed their growth cycle by the end of summer, other plants have just begun to burst into bloom, as they have adapted to thrive in cooler temperatures and shorter days. Their late seeds also provide a great food source for our winter bird species.



Field Trips



Sheboygan's Camp Y-Koda - Pee Wee Little Farmer summer camp (above) learned about dinosaurs, honeybees, & got a ride on the Dairyland Express!



Homeschool Groups

There was a nice turnout for homeschool groups this year leading into the fall season. Many of these groups include families with children that regularly attend field trips together. These families benefitted from the educational resources available throughout the gardens, and some voiced their hopes of returning in the future for additional programs.

The Children's Farm was always a hot spot for these programs; the Watershed Map was well used this season! (middle left photo) The Nature Studies Center had certainly gotten its fair share of visitors too. Many children explored the taxidermy collection there and were often given a lesson on animal adaptations. (bottom left photo)

We were lucky to meet so many interested, young learners that visited the gardens this season, from public schools and homeschools alike. We look forward to adding more programs like these in the years to come!



Seasonal Records

Phenology - “the study of cyclic and seasonal natural phenomena, especially in relation to climate and plant and animal life.”



Outdoor Observations

Date: August 22, 2023

High Temp: 71 F; Weather: Overcast

Notes: The 1st New England Aster is seen blooming in The Farm House prairie - fall is on its way!



Date: September 28, 2023

High Temp: 72 F; Weather: Overcast

Notes: Many species of fungi were found in the Jumes Woods while walking Buddy & Jake.



Date: October 18, 2023

High Temp: 60 F; Weather: Sunny

Notes: The Dendranthemums are in full bloom around the Perch Pond.



Date: October 31, 2023

High Temp: 33 F; Weather: Overcast

Notes: Snow is falling in the gardens for the first time this season! Sleet & Rain at times. Happy Halloween!



Date: November 6, 2023

High Temp: 68 F; Weather: Sunny

Notes: A Red Fox was spotted lounging in the sun during the daytime on the Council Berm.

