



ALLEN CENTENNIAL GARDEN

2016–2020 Strategic Plan

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From the Director

When I arrived as the new Director of the Allen Centennial Garden in May of 2015, it was clear I was inheriting something special. It is a particular privilege to join a strong organization that is poised for growth, and the Allen Centennial Garden certainly fits that mold.

The Garden's existing resources range from an intensely developed 2.5 acres with 27 distinct garden spaces to our strong operational support through gifts made to the UW-Foundation. The Friends of the Allen Centennial Garden, as a young and vibrant organization, offer great potential to create powerful synergies between the University and the communities we serve. A stellar and dedicated core of volunteers help the Garden in many ways, from hands-on gardening to docent tours, educational support, administrative tasks, and so much more.

Throughout this planning process there have been rich discussions about how the Allen Centennial Garden, as a part of the University of Wisconsin, should define its future. We came to realize the purpose of our special garden is similar yet excitingly different from that of a municipal public garden. **We** have the special challenge and opportunity to capture the attention and expertise of young minds – our students – as yet unfettered by “grown up” life.

Through forming strong connections with students of all ages, particularly UW-Madison students, we establish the relevance of the Allen Centennial Garden while creating lifelong gardeners with a passion for horticulture and places in which horticulture can occur.

I believe that passionate, informed, and well-nurtured gardeners can help solve many of the issues facing our society today; environmental, social, and economic. I believe gardening is a force for good – a force to be reckoned with – one that can transform our communities permanently and for the better.

Each day my inspiration and passion to extend the reach of the Allen Centennial Garden beyond our gates grows more fervent. After trialing a diversity of new programs and events earlier this year, we're already seeing enhanced interest and support from our community, and we'll continue to raise the bar each season.

I know the best is yet to come.

Benjamin Futa



Director, Allen Centennial Garden

Introduction

Public gardens throughout North America are experiencing a renaissance, finding new purpose as not only places of inspiration, beauty, and learning, but also functioning as community spaces and hubs for horticultural and ecological innovation. In responding to a range of critical issues including climate change, biodiversity, social justice, health and wellness, conservation, and the role of pollinators, public gardens are coming to be known beyond the horticultural community for their important work.

As a public garden that also is a part of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the Allen Centennial Garden has a specific and important role to play.

This plan takes full advantage of the challenge and opportunity to connect with students of all ages and embraces the Wisconsin Idea. New programs and partnerships will drive fresh audiences to discover how gardening can and should be a part of their lives, while appropriate tools and technology will empower our audiences to realize their learning goals. In tandem with programmatic initiatives, a comprehensive update of the Garden's Master Plan will provide enhanced synergy and focused direction.

With any ambitious plan for growth, a conscious effort must be made to ensure adequate resources are paired with careful and measured growth. The Garden will continue to develop a robust fundraising program in partnership with the Friends of Allen Centennial Garden and the UW-Foundation while leveraging existing resources.

Our goal in the coming years is not to
grow bigger, but to mature.

To deepen and expand our impact.

The Garden Mission

The Allen Centennial Garden at the University of Wisconsin-Madison is a public garden, outdoor classroom, and artful living laboratory showcasing exceptional and sustainable ornamental horticulture.

Guiding Principles

- Establish campus relevancy.
- Practice social, environmental, and economic sustainability.
- Emphasize collaboration to leverage existing resources.
- Showcase a diversity of plants and garden styles.
- Provide an expertise in ornamental plants.
- Interpret the relationship between humans and our surrounding landscape.
- Manage garden operations using flexible and adaptive principles.
- Develop community connections and experiences.



Goal One

Education and Public
Engagement

Foster a love and understanding
of horticulture and places in which
horticulture can occur.

Goal 1 : Education and Public Engagement

Foster a love and understanding of horticulture and places in which horticulture can occur.

Strategy 1.1: Ensure a vibrant and strong living collection in support of UW-Madison curriculum.

As a living museum, the Garden is a repository of our natural and cultural commonwealth, and this is expressed through our living collections. The information of yesterday is our history, and the answers to tomorrow's questions. We need to elevate our living collections to the status of non-living collections. (One wouldn't dream of having an original Salvador Dali without recording its provenance.) The quality of our programs is directly influenced by the quality of our collection.

- Maintain future funding for plant materials at a robust and appropriate level. **Ongoing**
- Continually analyze and evaluate the pattern of use for the living collection. **Ongoing**
 - o Implement a plant collections database accessible to the public. **2016**
 - o Develop a Living Collections Policy. **2016**
 - o Develop a Collections Development Plan. **2017**
 - o Pursue accreditation through the American Alliance of Museums (AAM) (Accreditation increases a museum's credibility and value to funders, policy makers, insurers, community and peers.) **2018**
- Invite faculty from across campus to utilize the Garden in development of new and existing curriculum and grant proposals. **Ongoing**



Goal 1 : Education and Public Engagement

Foster a love and understanding of horticulture and places in which horticulture can occur.

Strategy 1.2: Interpret the role of ornamental plants in the built environment.

Gardens tell a story through the narrative of plants. The University culture is naturally driven to experimentation and innovation while also having a mandate for meaningful public engagement. Public gardens help to bridge this gap, bringing research generated at the University to the public through accessible and engaging interpretation. The Garden is also a living laboratory, one that is rich in opportunities to explore our relationship to the built environment and beyond.

- Seek and develop exhibits that reflect cultural and learning opportunities. **Ongoing**
- Utilize the Garden to translate the work of UW-Madison to the public. **Ongoing**
- Generate a catalog of potential research projects and implement protocols to solicit, track, and report on research projects. **2017**
- Complete an interpretive master plan as part of the Garden Master Plan. **2017**



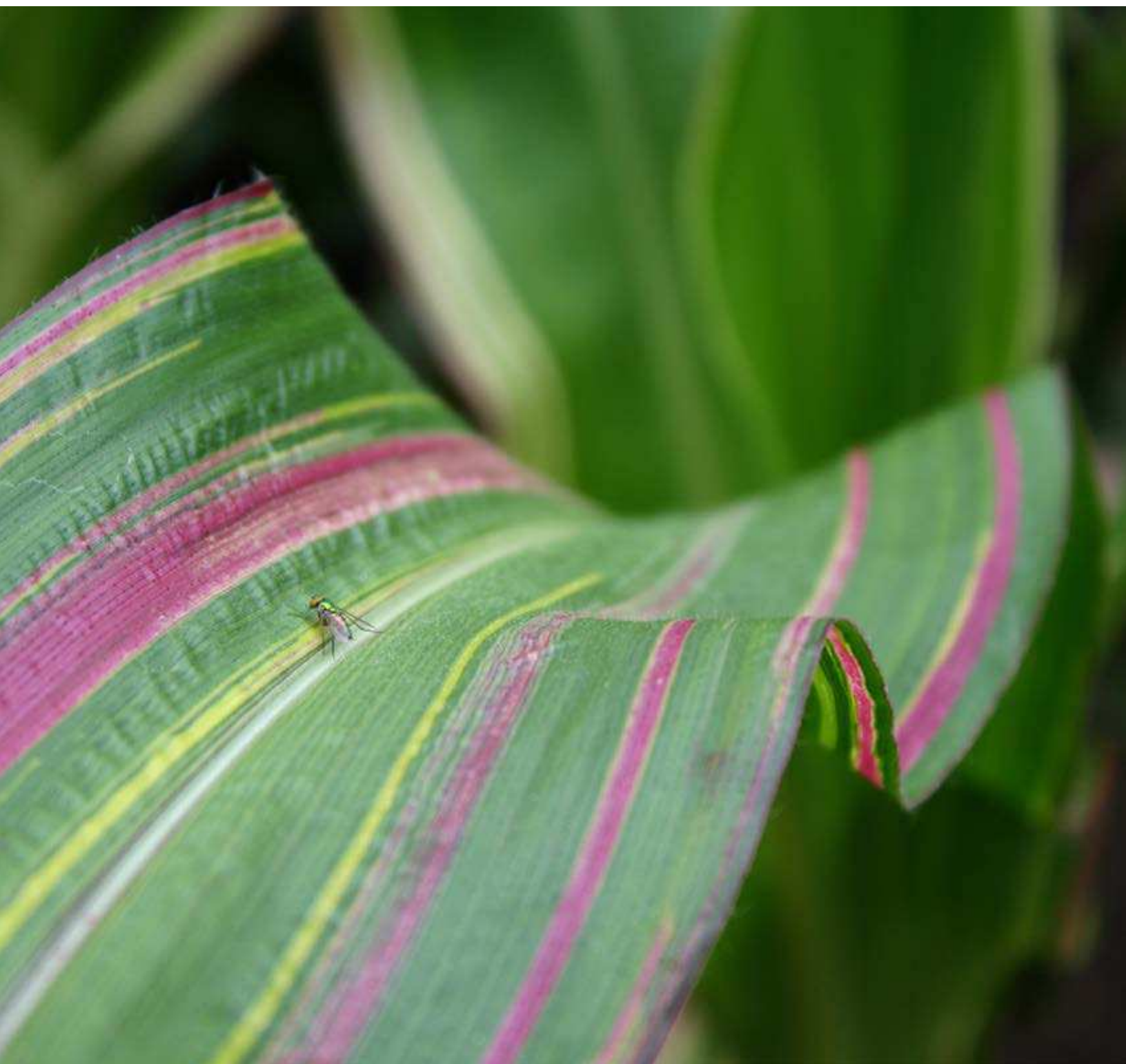
Goal 1 : Education and Public Engagement

Foster a love and understanding of horticulture and places in which horticulture can occur.

Strategy 1.3: Work with the Friends of Allen Centennial Garden to realize the full potential of the Garden, providing tools for community members to achieve their educational goals.

An extension of the University's mandate for meaningful public engagement, the Friends of Allen Centennial Garden is in a unique position to catalyze an educational program at the Garden through the development of new public educational offerings, both on and off-site.

- Explore and provide a variety of experiences both in and outside the Garden. **Ongoing**
- Offer a range of pop-up programs throughout the green season. **2016**
- Create a formalized docent program. **2016**
- Develop a four-season calendar of public-oriented educational offerings. **2016**
- Create programs and partnerships to develop activities for K–12 students. **2017**



Goal Two

The Third Place

Develop the garden as a place to
gather, meet, experience, and relax.

Goal 2: The Third Place

Develop the garden as a place to gather, meet, experience, and relax.

Strategy 2.1: Invite people to discover how welcoming a garden can be.

Creating lifelong gardeners is a critical component in creating healthy communities.

Gardening is more than a hobby; it is proven to provide numerous physical and psychological benefits. Gardens are a conduit for community building, providing beauty, nourishment, and positive social networks. Creating lifelong gardeners begins by discovering and embracing horticulture, and as a public garden, we are in a unique position to facilitate this discovery. A better understanding of our current visitors and encouraging new visitors is the first step.

- Create a welcoming space that invites students of all ages to study and enjoy. **Ongoing**
- Increase visitation by at least 5% each year. **Ongoing**
 - Establish mechanisms to measure visitation and visitor demographics. **2016**
- Strengthen programs that promote gardening for enjoyment. **Ongoing**
- Initiate events and programs that create a culture of gardeners. **Ongoing**
- Engage in meaningful conversations with visitors that focus on individual interests. **Ongoing**
- Develop staff competencies to anticipate and meet the changing needs of visitors. **Ongoing**
- Establish mechanisms to measure visitor satisfaction. **2016**



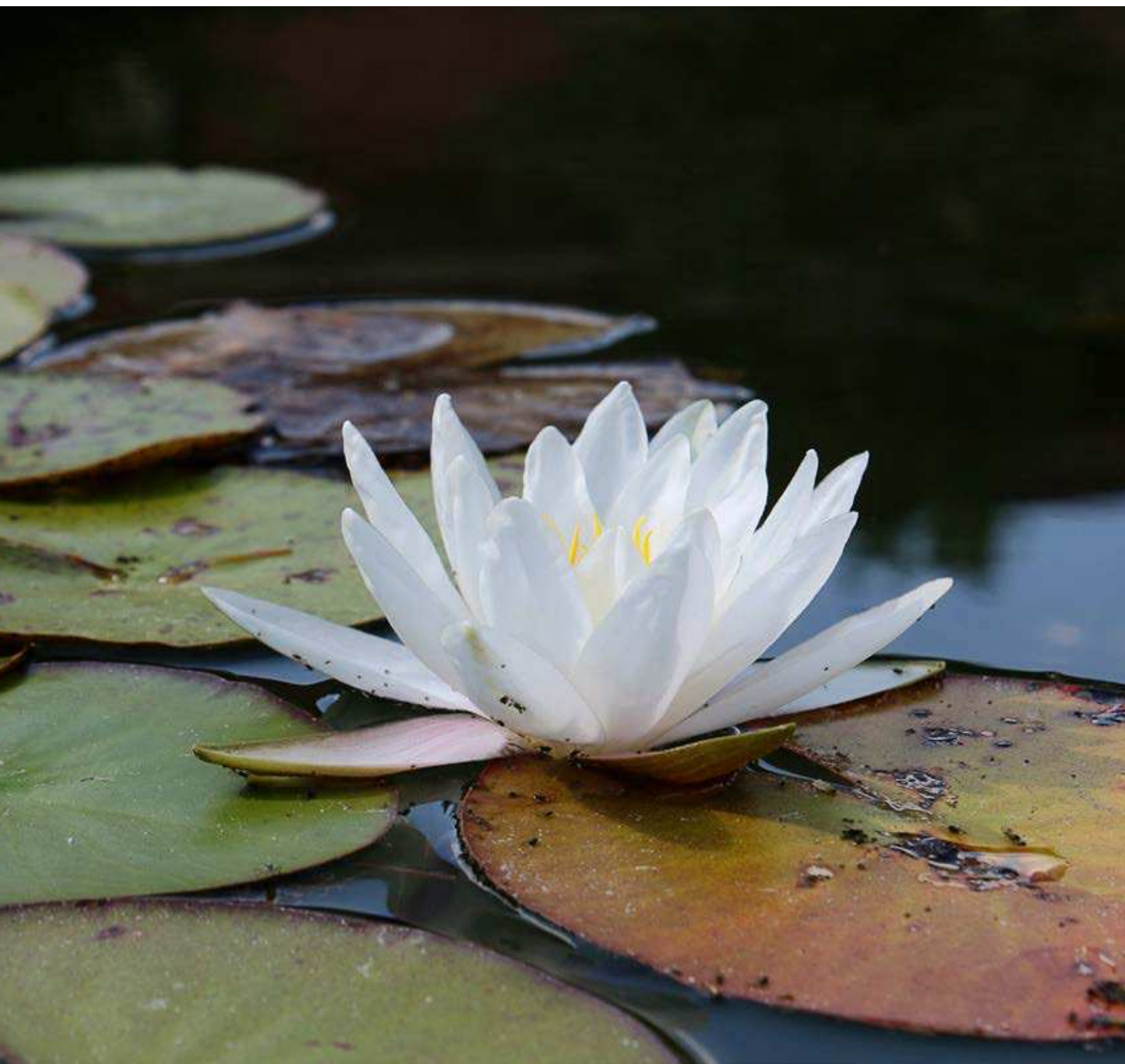
Goal 2: The Third Place

Develop the garden as a place to gather, meet, experience, and relax.

Strategy 2.2: Work with the Friends of Allen Centennial Garden to ensure the Garden meets the needs of our diverse population.

Everyone can and should garden in their own way – gardening is not a “one size fits all” discipline. Creating adaptive and tailored programs for a diverse population will bring the benefits of gardens and gardening to new audiences.

- Tailor programs and events to reflect the Garden’s user base. **Ongoing**
- Provide exhibits and programs that showcase the rich heritage of the community. **Ongoing**
- Employ a diverse staff that creates a connection to the population served. **Ongoing**



Goal 2: The Third Place

Develop the garden as a place to gather, meet, experience, and relax.

Strategy 2.3: Work with the Friends of Allen Centennial Garden to leverage the resources of UW-Madison and surrounding communities to create a vibrant gathering space.

Public gardens are natural gathering spaces. Through presenting a welcoming atmosphere and generating unique and captivating programs, we can transform from a passive gathering space to an active, sought-after, and high-value community space rich in cultural experiences. In doing so, new and returning visitors will begin to see gardens and gardening as something that can and should be a part of their lives. This strategy will require careful and measured development, ensuring the gardens themselves are not compromised by the increase in activity.

- Utilize spaces within the Garden as venues for new programming. **Ongoing**
- Create opportunities for visitor engagement beyond the basic garden experience. **Ongoing**
- Pursue partnerships designed to strengthen our community. **Ongoing**
- Introduce and curate opportunities for permanent and temporary art installations through the establishment of an Arts Committee. **2016**
- Develop at least two signature cultural/social events per calendar year. **2017**



Goal 2: The Third Place

Develop the garden as a place to gather, meet, experience, and relax.

Strategy 2.4: Promote partnerships and programs to help people understand what the Garden offers.

It is not an asset to be a “Hidden Gem” or “Best Kept Secret” – these phrases are code for having wonderful offerings that no one knows about. Things that are hidden often are not valued, and value is critical to the long-term viability of any organization. In generating new programs and initiatives, we must ensure we capture every opportunity to tell our story and engage with our audiences – we must continually and clearly communicate the value we bring to our community.

- Continually analyze and optimize the Garden’s overall communication strategy. **Ongoing**
- Use current social media to connect with our community and explore and implement new tools as they develop. **Ongoing**
- Utilize off-site events such as Garden Expo and the Wisconsin Science Fair to promote the Garden. **Ongoing**
- Develop a recognizable Garden brand through implementation of a new style guide and updated publications. **Ongoing**
- Review and rewrite policies to ensure a seamless experience in using the garden. **Ongoing**



Goal Three

Operations and Sustainability

Ensure the Garden remains in a healthy operational position, poised for responsible growth & development.

Goal 3: Operations and Sustainability

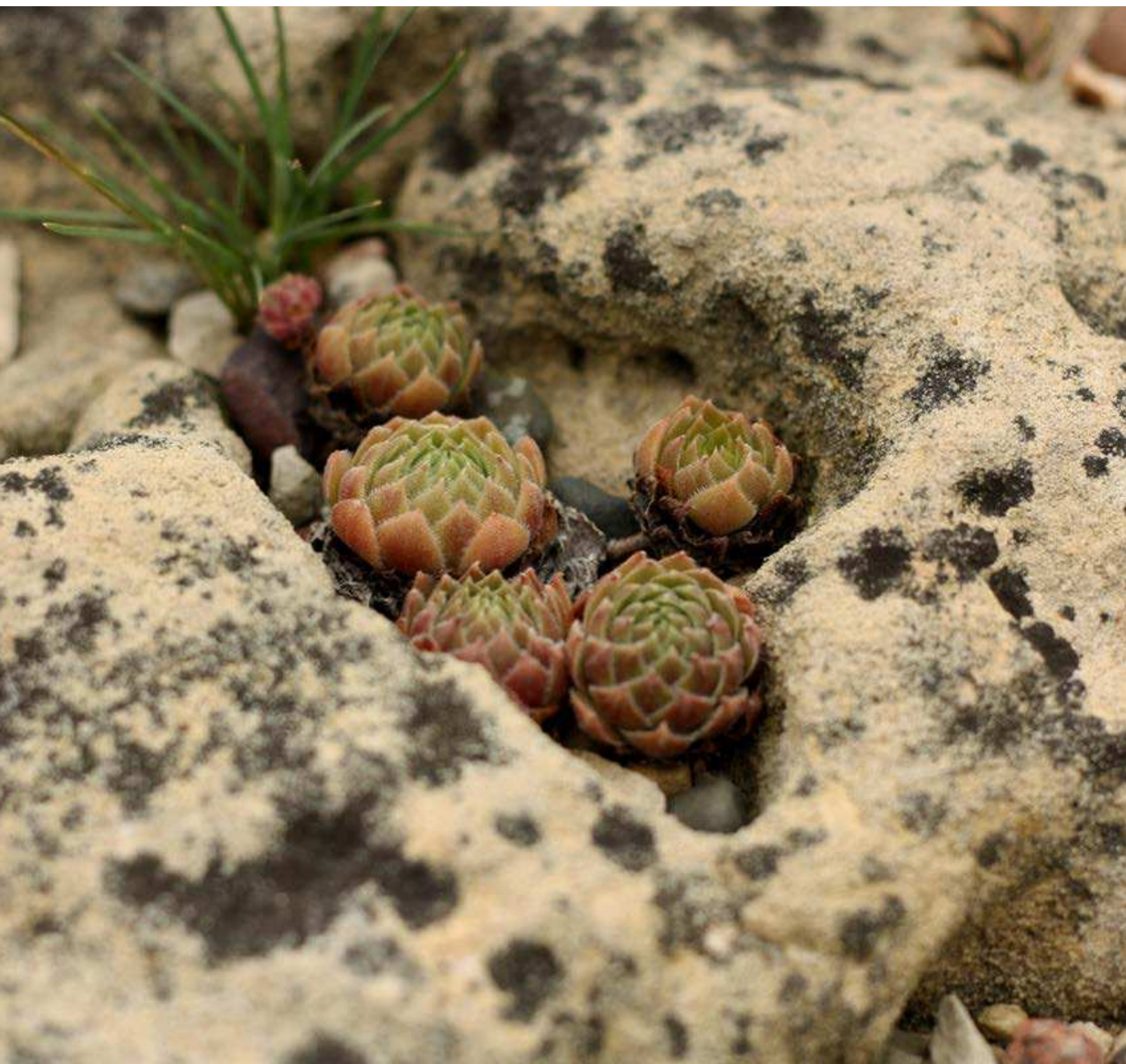
Ensure the Garden remains in a healthy operational position, poised for responsible growth & development.

Strategy 3.1 Effectively utilize the Garden's existing footprint.

The Garden is an intensely-planted 2.5 acres with a range of strong assets on site including the Dean's Residence, a recently renovated back-of-house space, and 27 distinct gardens.

The potential of this space has not been exhausted and should be fully developed before an expansion is considered.

- Leverage Garden spaces to optimize Friends activity and fundraising. **Ongoing**
- Develop mutually beneficial program space in the Dean's Residence. **Ongoing**
- Emphasize a nimble internal culture that allows for experimentation with a wide variety of activities. **Ongoing**
- Complete a comprehensive update of the Garden's Master Plan. **2017**
 - o Generate a phased plan tied to fundraising goals.



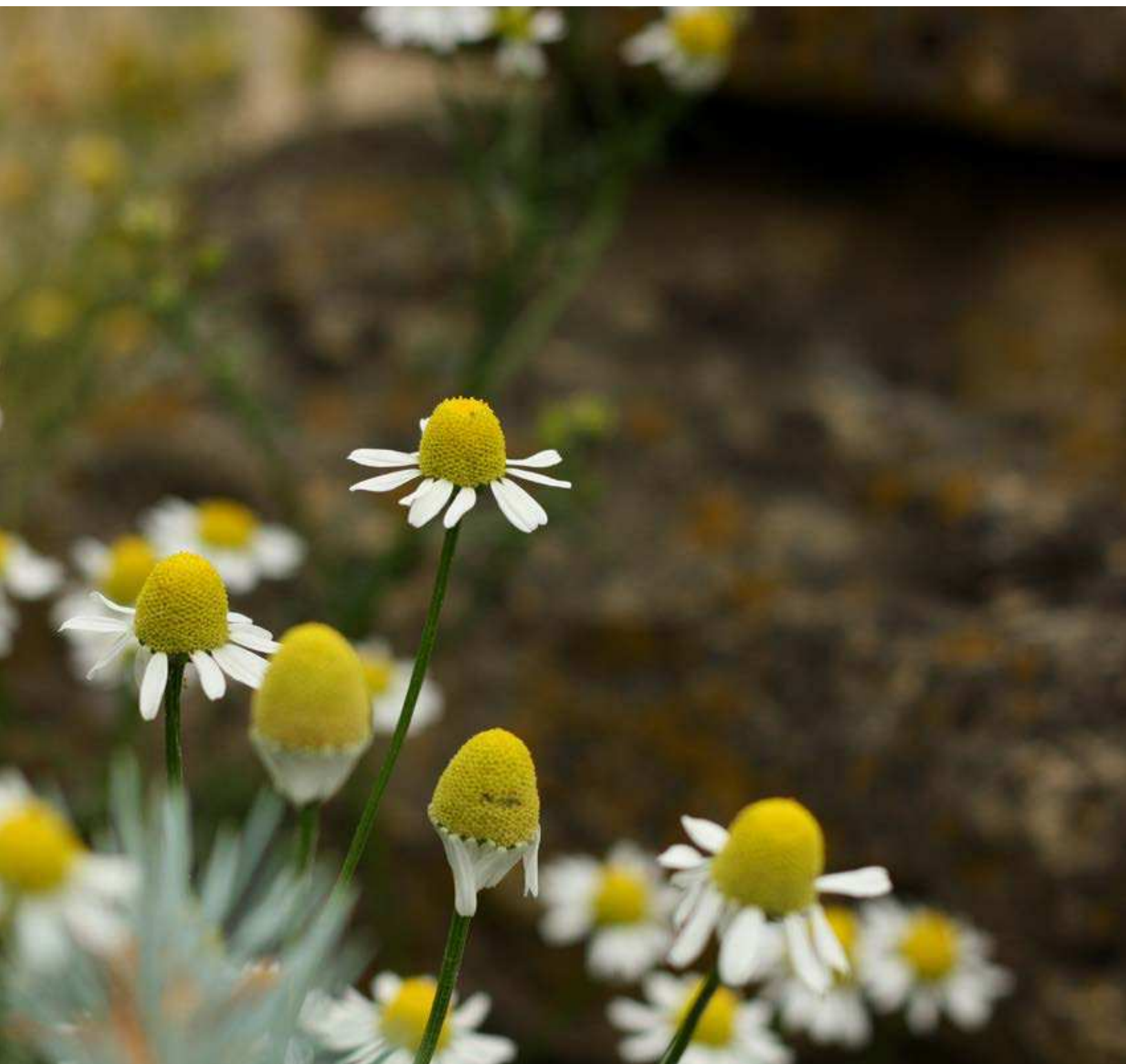
Goal 3: Operations and Sustainability

Ensure the Garden remains in a healthy operational position, poised for responsible growth & development.

Strategy 3.2 Promote a nimble and efficient internal culture.

We live in an age of rapid change – organizations that are unable to move quickly and adapt to change while harnessing new opportunities will be left behind. Ensuring a nimble internal culture will allow us to take full advantage of new challenges and opportunities.

- Encourage experimentation with a wide variety of activities. **Ongoing**
- Nurture strong relationships and share strategic objectives with entities that support the Garden, including the Friends of Allen Centennial Garden, the UW-Foundation, the Horticulture Department, and the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. **Ongoing**
- Review and update current safety procedures to be in line with industry best practices and UW standards. **2016**



Goal 3: Operations and Sustainability

Ensure the Garden remains in a healthy operational position, poised for responsible growth & development.

Strategy 3.3 Ensure financial security and sustainability.

In light of this ambitious plan for growth, with the addition of necessary infrastructure updates and garden improvements, additional funds will be needed in both operating and capital expenditures. The Garden is presently well-funded via an endowment with the UW-Foundation. Ensuring continued financial support for our projects and programs will be critical to our continued success.

- Develop and monitor an annual budget including long-term goals and projects. **Ongoing**
- Work with the UW-Foundation and Friends of Allen Centennial Garden to identify and nurture potential donors. **Ongoing**
- Ensure fundraising efforts are tied to appropriate and specific projects. **Ongoing**
- Harness opportunities for earned revenue from private event rentals, including but not limited to weddings. **Ongoing**
- Develop a planned giving program in collaboration with the Friends of Allen Centennial Garden and UW-Foundation. **2017**



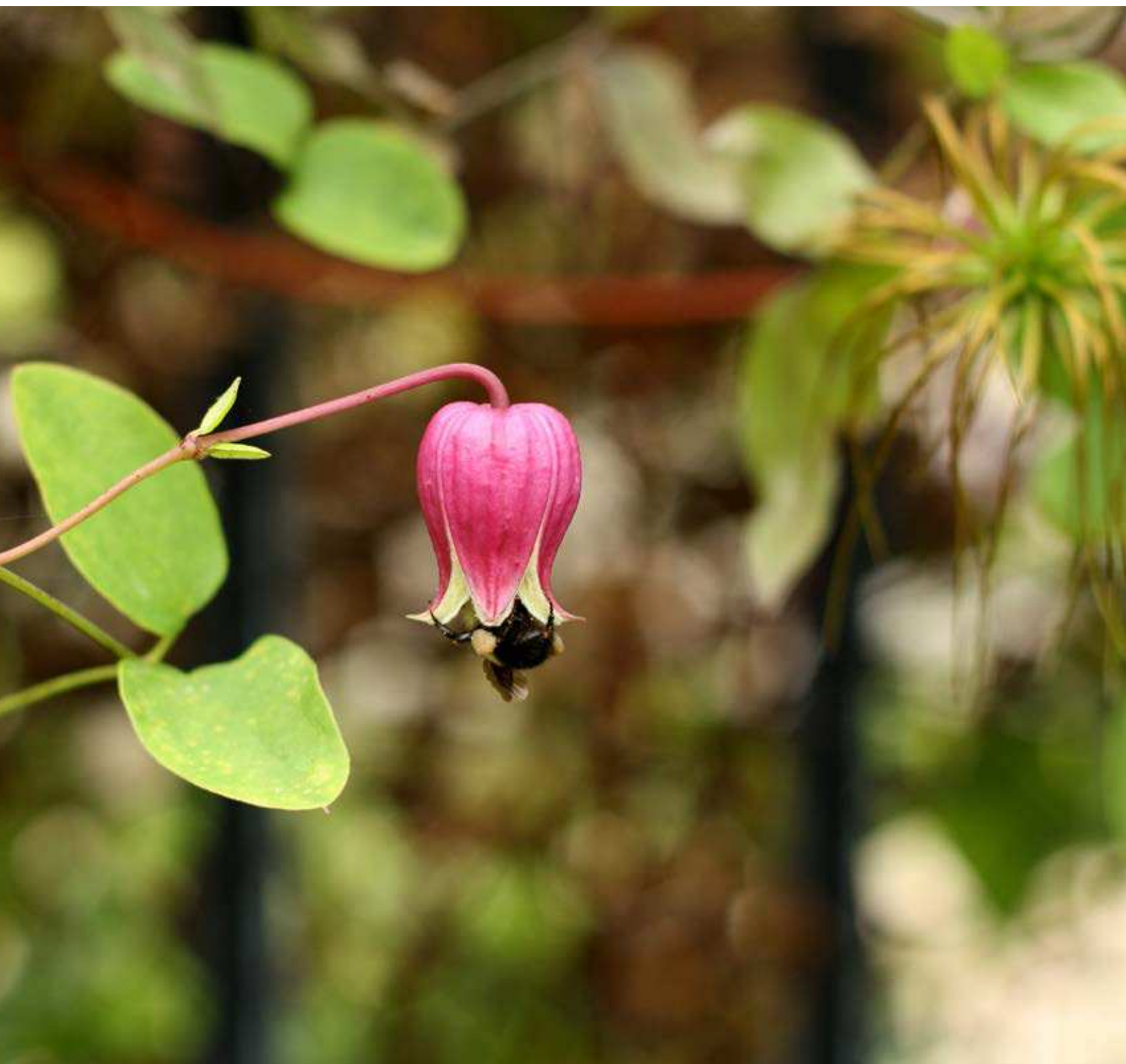
Goal 3: Operations and Sustainability

Ensure the Garden remains in a healthy operational position, poised for responsible growth & development.

Strategy 3.4 Enhance and improve the Garden's environmental impacts.

Creating resilient landscapes that preserve or enhance our existing landscapes for the benefit of future generations is a social, economic, and moral imperative. A garden is tamed nature. As such, we as gardeners must develop and enhance synergistic partnerships with our landscapes and the natural world.

- Implement protocols that reduce water consumption. **Ongoing**
- Develop initiatives to support and interpret the role of pollinators. **Ongoing**
- Utilize local (within 100 miles) growers and materials at least 75% of the time. **Ongoing**
- Inventory and assess that status of synthetic chemicals currently in storage and recommend saving or responsible disposal. **2016**
- Introduce a waste-handling program that includes composting and recycling. **2016**



Support the Garden

Become a Friends Member

The Friends of Allen Centennial Garden is an independent 501(c)3 nonprofit organization focused on providing enhanced programming, outreach, and fundraising support. When you support the Friends of Allen Centennial Garden, your support extends beyond the garden gates:

- You are supporting meaningful learning experiences for our entire community.
- You are recognizing and supporting a dedicated and exceptional crew of volunteers.
- You are providing opportunities for immersive and engaging internship opportunities.
- You are creating a rich calendar of events and educational programming for learners of all ages.

Volunteer Your Talents

As a volunteer at the Allen Centennial Garden, you have unlimited opportunities to share your talents, explore new ideas, and connect with people of all ages. Whatever your interest or talent, we will explore opportunities for you in the Garden's volunteer program. Consider joining our volunteer family!

Make a Donation or Planned Gift

The Allen Centennial Garden is funded entirely with private gifts. A variety of permanent named opportunities are available for individuals who chose to pay tribute to their relationship with the University or to honor and recognize someone special in their lives. For inquiries about making a contribution to the Gardens or to name a garden, contact Jodi Wickham.

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