



FRIENDS
OF THE
OAK PARK
CONSERVATORY

Spring 2018 CONSERVATORY Conversations

The Newsletter from the Friends of the Oak Park Conservatory

FOPCON'S 29TH ANNUAL PLANT SALE MAY 4-6

What would spring be without the annual FOPCON plant sale? Starting in August of last year our volunteers, working alongside Park District staff, have been planning and working to bring this wonderful event to completion, logging hundreds of hours for this worthy cause. As our largest fundraiser of the year we gratefully welcome our customers, both loyal supporters and new. Enjoy the wonderful array of edibles and ornamentals – 169 varieties this year, 70 of them new, selected by gardeners for gardeners.

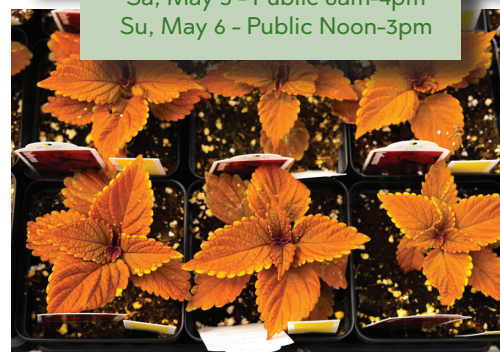
Our catalog is up on our website, www.fopcon.org, and has the information you need to start planning your garden.

Please join us on Friday May 4th for FOPCON Members-only shopping from 2:00 pm – 6:00 pm. The sale is open to the public Saturday May 5th from 8:00 am – 4:00 pm and Sunday May 6th from 12:00 pm – 3:00 pm. As last year, FOPCON members could pre-order online beginning April 2nd, with pick up of orders on Friday May 4th from 1 pm - 2 pm and 6 pm - 7 pm (pick up only) and during Members' Sale from 2 pm - 6 pm. Now: get growing!



PLANT SALE HOURS:

F, May 4 - Members Only 2-6pm
Sa, May 5 - Public 8am-4pm
Su, May 6 - Public Noon-3pm



By The Numbers: FOPCON Event and Program Attendance

	2015	2016	2017
Docent led tours	51 tours / 1206 people	47 tours / 967 people	59 tours / 892 people
Exploration Station	1660	1601	1603
Exploration Kits	8 schools -/24 kits	10 schools / 26 kits	11 kits borrowed
Garden Walk	575*	550*	Data not available
KidsFest**	550	689	949
Plant Sale	1129	1116	1260
Toddler Exploration Time (TET)	225***	245	228
Uncorked****	480	514	Data not available

*Does not include "comped" volunteers

***Program grew from 1 session to 2 sessions offered in 2015

** In 2018, the event was 'Sold out' with 625 FREE tickets "sold"; 502 attended

****Does not include volunteers - 25 for each event

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AND MUCH MORE!

Annual President's Report

*By Ellen Kuner, President
Friends of the Oak Park Conservatory*

FOPCON has been very busy this year carrying out our mission to promote community interest in the Conservatory, offer educational and recreational programs and support projects that benefit the Conservatory:



- **Uncorked** brought 448 people to the Conservatory. More than half had never been there.
- Educational opportunities abound. **KidsFest**, the **Exploration Station**, **Toddler Exploration Time (TET)** and **Discovery Garden Exploration Time (DGET)** were filled by 3,342 eager children and adults in 2017. Two of the programs – **KidsFest** and **TET** are so popular that pre-registration for these is required. Docents led 59 **showroom tours** for children, adults and diverse learners. We bring the Conservatory to the classroom with **Exploration Kits**. Eleven kits were distributed to District 97 kindergartens reaching 252 students. We developed a stellar new kit, **"Plants Super Powers,"** designed for the first grades.
- To support projects that benefit the Conservatory, we contributed \$20,000 as the first installment of our 4-year promise of \$60,947 to pay for the necessary replacement of the old heating pipes in the showrooms. We gave \$2911.47 to pay for pumpkins and refreshments at Fall Fest. How fun it is to see small children so eager to select pumpkins from the bins in the Rubinstein Garden.

Our newly created Funding Development Committee and the Event Planning Committee are hard at work. The **Plant Sale**, **Garden Walk** and the **Auction**, **"Bid for Buds,"** were all successful.

In 2017 our devoted volunteers donated 7511 hours or an equivalent of four full-time employees! The volunteers help in the Ops Room, host Uncorked, sell in the Gift Store, give tours, plus lead the Exploration Station, TET, DGET, and KidsFest.

This is my final President's message. My term ends in June. I'm amazed at all we accomplished during the past four years – the Elsie Jacobsen Discovery Garden, the 30th Anniversary Celebration, TET, DGET and more. It has been an honor to work with such talented people to support the Conservatory, Oak Park's treasure. Many thanks to all of you.

Thank You

Donations were made in honor of the following: Anonymous Discovery Garden Patron, Hilda Birney, Kathleen Garness, Joshua Hoffstadter, Barbara A. Pagniucci, and Ken Truscott.

Donations were made in the memory of the following: Sam Battaglia, Rose Costopoulos, Susan Fry, Jim Greene, Hugh Helfer, Gene Kearley. Martha Pozioniombka, Dr. Herbert M. Rubinstein, and Ellen Wehrle.



FRIENDS
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FOPCON Mission Statement:

To offer educational and recreational opportunities, to promote community interest in the Oak Park Conservatory, to support projects that benefit the conservatory.

P.O. Box 1096,
Oak Park, IL 60304
(708)725-2460
info@fopcon.org

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Inga Simitz
Jeff Stewart
Kim Wilson

STAFF

Beth Cheng, Executive Director
Kathy McNamara, Volunteer and
Program Coordinator



Executive Director's Report

*By Beth Cheng, Executive Director
Friends of the Oak Park Conservatory*

WHO: The Friends of the Oak Park Conservatory needs YOU!

WHAT: Become a FOPCON ambassador to help us grow our circle of friends. Share your passion for the Conservatory through personal outreach. Let people know what a great place the Conservatory is to visit, rent or have a birthday party; and what a great place it is to support as a FOPCON member, volunteer or donor.

WHY: Every time I hear young children eagerly asking when the Discovery Garden tools will be put out, or see adults relaxing on a summer Uncorked night, I am reminded of why we -- the Friends, and that means you -- do what we do. Thanks to your generous commitment of funds and time, we met our 2017 goal of contributing \$20,000 towards replacement of the Conservatory's heating pipes while continuing our creative programming. We are immensely grateful for your continued loyalty but also need to engage more of the 40,000 Conservatory visitors as active supporters so we can fulfill the remainder of our total \$60,000 commitment towards the pipes and continue offering the experiences that bring the Conservatory to life. Please help us make more good friends, like yourselves, so we can broaden the base of support for the Oak Park Conservatory.



HOW: There are many ways to be an ambassador, whether with a group or one on one. Here are some options and please share any ideas you have!

- Connect with Conservatory visitors at an information table during events or on a weekend.
- Reach out at community events such as What's Blooming on Harrison or Day in Our Village.
- Bring a friend or neighbor to a member lecture or the plant sale, using the new member benefit of being able to bring one or more guests depending on your membership level.

Represent the Friends at gatherings of local groups, such as the Chamber of Commerce Young Professionals.

WHEN: First training for ambassadors will be on Monday, May 14, 6 to 7 p.m. The session will equip you with the information you need and include role play opportunities. Please contact me at director@fopcon.org or 725-2460, ext. 1 by May 7 to RSVP for the training, or if you are interested in becoming an ambassador even if you can't attend on May 14. Thank you for all you do!



*The Oak Park Conservatory is a historic
property of the Park District of Oak Park.*

NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEMBER MEETING: JUNE 11 AT 7PM

**Annual Meeting Of Members,
Friends Of The Oak Park Conservatory**

Come join us for a member lecture with Jim Kuehnle and Patricia Niedrich from Clover's Garden Center who will discuss the Mosquito Repellent Garden. Stay to vote and welcome new members to the Board



FOPCON Members: Visit our partners and save 10%!

Clover's Garden Center

7401 West 25th Street
North Riverside, Illinois 60546
708-788-0243

www.cloversgardencenter.com

Garden center. *Note: seasonal.*

Good Earth Greenhouse & Café

7900 West Madison Street
River Forest, Illinois 60305
708-366-9500

www.goodearthgreenhouse.com

Plants, garden accessories, flowers & a café.

McAdam Landscaping, Inc.

2001 Des Plaines Avenue
Forest Park, Illinois 60130
708-771-2299

www.mcadamlandscape.com

Landscaping design, construction and maintenance for residential and commercial lawns & gardens plus retail plants & trees.

Note: Discount only in the retail store.

Westgate Flowers & Plant Shop

841 South Oak Park Avenue
Oak Park, Illinois 60304
708-386-0072

www.westgateflowers.com

Full service florist.

Education Committee Report

By Linda Smith, Chair

The Education Committee has been very busy creating and implementing new programs and activities for children and families visiting the Conservatory.

The **Exploration Station Program** on Saturdays and Sundays continues to educate and amaze children with new topics each month. The **Toddler Exploration Program (TET)** has two sessions on the third Friday of each month. Children participating in the TET Program now register online using the Park District's site, and the program is FREE.

The **Exploration Kits** continue to be very popular with District 97 first grade teachers. This year we have created a new kit entitled "Plants Super Powers". We are reorganizing our kit "Traveling Seeds" to be able to offer it to the preschools in the area. The usage of these kits is a wonderful way to introduce children to the Conservatory.

The **Exploration Backpacks** continue to be a BIG hit with the children. The children enjoy using the backpacks all year around in the Conservatory and the Discovery Garden. We have one set of backpacks for fall and winter and another set for spring and summer. The children's favorite tool in the backpack is the BINOCULARS!

TOURS for children as well as adults continue to be very popular. By the fall of 2018 we will have a new "K-2 Tour", a new "3-5 Tour", and a new "Preschool Tour". In 2019 we will create a new tour for Middle Schoolers and a new tour for High Schoolers /Adults. Our "Diverse Learner Tour" continues to be very popular.

In the Discovery Garden, we have a new Program called **Discovery Garden Exploration Time (DGET)**. This program runs every Wednesday and Saturday, June through August (10:30 am – 12:30pm). We have a different topic every month. A Garden Docent is in the Discovery Garden to lead the activities.

The **Elsie Jacobsen Discovery Garden** continues to be an enchanting place for children to learn about nature and discover how much fun playing with water can be! The children love the PUMP! They also love exploring the garden and the runnel using the "tools" we have for them in the shed.

The Education Committee is hard at work creating new programs and activities for children and families to learn and explore nature at the Conservatory. The Conservatory is like walking through a **terrarium** to learn about nature. **Come and join us! We are waiting for you!**



Perennial & Garden Tool Exchange

Saturday May 19, 2018

Drop off houseplants, perennials and tools between 9:30 am – 11:30 am. Then return at noon to take your pick from the bounty. What a great way to expand your garden or add to your tool collection.

Note: we cannot accept plain hosta or orange daylilies. Everyone seems to have too many of these!

Volunteering at the Conservatory

By Kathy McNamara, Volunteer and
Program Coordinator

Volunteer activities at the Conservatory change from season to season, just like our plant collections. Volunteers are asked to help in a variety of ways throughout the year.



At the **beginning of the year**, when the Oak Park weather just won't seem to warm up, FOPCON volunteers are indoors, transplanting seedlings. These tiny plants will continue to be nurtured for FOPCON's annual plant sale, and some will be planted in the parks as Spring finally takes hold! To ward off cabin fever, volunteers welcome visitors on the first Sunday in March to experience our FREE community event, KidsFest!

Activities continue throughout the **Spring**, as our tour schedule begins to fill in. Trained Docents lead groups through the showrooms, sharing information about the Conservatory plant collections, and ecosystems. Final preparations are underway for the Plant Sale, as the pre-order site is tested, and the catalog is shared with like-minded plant enthusiasts. Gift Shop volunteers assist customers with their Spring Bulb purchases and Arbor Day tree giveaways.

During the warm, **Summer** months, Garden Docents converse and share information with our youngest learners in the Elsie Jacobsen Discovery Garden. Time is also set aside for our adult learners as well. UNCORKED brings guests together on the 4th Friday of each Summer month, to sit back and relax, enjoy great food and music, along with a tour through the

showrooms, all at a leisurely pace. Volunteers are on hand to help make this a pleasant and successful event.

Another summertime offering is the annual Garden Walk! What a great way to enjoy the community, and experience the selected gardens throughout Oak Park and River Forest.

In **September**, students are heading back to school, and that means it's time to get in the groove and learn about new topics at the Exploration Station on Saturdays or Sundays. Our Toddler Exploration Time (TET) program also comes back on the 3rd Friday of each month during the school year. Volunteers run both of these educational programs, creating exciting lessons that include hands-on activities.

As the **days shorten**, the Conservatory prepares for the upcoming holidays and invites guests to partake in an evening Candlelight Walk or peruse the Wintergreens Market. Volunteers help to decorate the Conservatory and lend a hand during the busy holiday season.

All **throughout the year**, volunteers act as Ambassadors, sharing their knowledge of the Oak Park Conservatory, and how to get involved as a member, volunteer or donor.

As our organization looks forward, we continue to recruit volunteers, focusing on specialized roles for a variety of projects. Please consider offering your expertise, and talents to keep FOPCON moving forward in the years ahead. Contact me at coordinator@fopcon.org or 708-725-2460, Option 2 to learn more about volunteering.



George Can't Wait to
See You at the Sale!

PLANT SALE HOURS:

F, May 4 - Members Only 2-6pm
Sa, May 5 - Public 8am-4pm
Su, May 6 - Public Noon-3pm





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FRIENDS OF THE OAK PARK CONSERVATORY DONOR LIST

A huge thank you to all our donors for your enormous generosity. We are grateful to the following donors who donated January 1, 2017 through March 31, 2018. Donors with a cumulative total of \$500 or greater are recognized on the Donor Board hanging in the Conservatory lobby.

\$800 AND ABOVE

John Brancel, DVM
Carol and John Dudzik
Ebinger Family Charitable Fund
Good Heart Work Smart Foundation
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John Seaton
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Peter and Elinor Crane
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Membership Committee

By Brittany McCreary, Chair

The membership committee worked hard this year to reimagine membership levels, which are now in effect! Membership levels are now based on the number of allowed admissions to the Plant Sale, Member Lectures, and number of discounted tickets for purchase for the Garden Walk: our Basic level = two admissions/discounted tickets, Plus level = three admissions/discounted tickets, and Premier level = five admissions/discounted tickets. What does this mean for you? You now have the option to bring a guest(s) to member lectures or plant sale early shopping, regardless of whether or not they are a part of your household. What an excellent way to help spread the word about the Friends and the Conservatory!

Our member lectures continue to excite and inspire. Our series theme this year is "Discoveries for Your Garden". Our next lecture is Monday, June 11: "Discover the Mosquito Repellent Garden" (just in time for Summer!). In August we'll "Discover How To Create Butterfly Habitats" and in October, we'll "Discover How to Put Your Garden To Bed".

As an active member of FOPCON, we are excited to invite YOU to join our membership committee. We are looking for eager volunteers to get involved as ambassadors at our events, to call on members when it comes time to renew, and to help plan member events. Without your continued support, our programs would cease to continue educating and engaging our community. Those interested in volunteering should contact our volunteer coordinator Kathy McNamara at coordinator@fopcon.org.

Finally, remember that your membership gets you 10% off at the Oak Park Conservatory Gift Shop as well as select local garden stores - be sure to utilize this discount as you buy garden supplies this season! Thank you for all of your support of the Friends. Please consider bringing a guest to our next event!

Join Our Legacy Society

Think ahead and join our Legacy Society. Planned gifts, such as bequests and IRA/qualified retirement plan designations will make you eligible to join our Legacy Society. For more information, please contact Beth Cheng, Executive Director, at 708-725-2460, ext. 1 or email director@fopcon.org.

the OAK PARK CONSERVATORY

UNCORKED

FOURTH FRIDAYS, JUNE - SEPTEMBER, 6-8PM



Our Summer Social

We hope to see you at Uncorked this year. What a great way to relax early on a Friday evening – music, appetizers, wine or beer and much more. This year's dates are June 22nd, July 27th, August 24th and September 28th. The time is as always 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm.

Advance tickets are available online for a reduced price. Advance tickets are \$15. Go to www.pdop.org to purchase tickets. Tickets will be \$18 at the door. For more information email uncorked@fopcon.org or phone 708-725-2400.

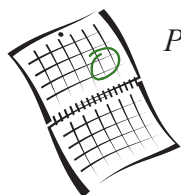




CONSERVATORY *Conversations*

The Friends of the Oak Park Conservatory
PO Box 1096
Oak Park, IL 60304

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!



• **May 4, 2018**

Plant Sale Members' Day

• **May 19, 2018**

Perennial Exchange

• **June 11, 2018**

Annual Meeting of Members

• **June 24, 2018**

Garden Walk



The 25th Annual Oak Park and River Forest Garden Walk will be held on Sunday, June 24th from 10 am to 4 pm rain or shine. Make note of the date and prepare for an exciting self-guided tour of eight unique gardens. Once again "Plein Air" painters will be demonstrating their amazing creativity in some of the gardens.

Tickets will be available May 1st online at www.gcopr.org and June 1st at the Conservatory and the Oak Park Visitors' Center. Prior to the event tickets are \$15 for general public and at a reduced fee for FOPCON members (see www.fopcon.org for details). All tickets are \$20 the day of the event.

Additional information and photos from the 2017 gardens are available on our Facebook page, OPRFGW, and online at www.fopcon.org or www.gcopr.org.

This is a joint venture of the Garden Club of Oak Park River Forest and the Friends of the Oak Park Conservatory. If you wish to volunteer during the Walk contact: Sue Milojevic, smilojevic@yahoo.com