All Three Domes Are Open

Work in the Desert Dome was completed in October, meaning that all three domes are now open for regular business hours and events! For details about the future of the conservatory, please see “From the Director’s Chair” and “From the President” inside this newsletter.

Celebrate New Year’s Eve at the Domes!

By Liz Fehring
Events Coordinator

Please join us for our annual New Year’s Eve Family Celebration Saturday, December 31, 2016 from 6:00 PM – 9:00 PM. This is the only indoor, evening, family event in the city! We will feature live entertainment for the whole family including live music, a DJ Dance Party in the Annex, fire dancers, face painters, balloon artists, Magician Rick Allen, find the live statue, give-aways, children’s crafts, and much more!

This year we will have a new and MUCH improved balloon drop from the Annex ceiling at the end of the evening. Special admission rates apply – membership passes and Mitchell Park coupons not valid for this event.

When: Saturday, December 31, 6:00 PM – 9:00 PM

Cost: Adults $15; children 3-17 $5; 2 and under FREE. For more information, visit www.milwaukeedomes.org

Milwaukee Winter Farmer’s Market is Hopping

As regular season farmers markets pack up their tents and shut down shop for the year, people searching for a taste of Wisconsin can continue to support small producers and celebrate the tastes of the season at southeast Wisconsin’s premier winter farmers market. The market will again be held in the Conservatory Annex.

When: Saturdays, November 5 through April 8, 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM [Exceptions: No market on November 26, December 24, or December 31]

Cost: Admission to the market is free
Holiday Show in the Show Dome: Not a Creature Was Stirring

By Burt Gross
Parks Artist

The “Not a Creature was Stirring” Holiday 2016 show in the Show Dome will be unlike any other! The Show Dome will be transformed into a winter forest filled with Colorado Blue Spruce, Black Hills Spruce, Balsam Fir, White Fir, and Mugo Pine trees. As you explore these wintery woods, you’ll come across the homes of many forest critters as they take shelter from the cold. See how mice, rabbits, and other rustic creatures decorate their trees for the holidays. This brilliantly lit show wouldn't be complete without a wide variety of poinsettias, complemented by red ‘Miracle’ Amaryllis, ‘Partytime Sangria’ Coleus, ‘Silverleaf Red’ Cyclamen, and ‘Blueberry Thrill’ Pansies.

There will also be a visit from special guests Santa, Mrs. Claus, and the Dancing Christmas tree on December 4, 10, and 17 from noon to 3:00 PM. Bring the kids and your camera!

Half Price Gift Membership Sale

The Mitchell Park Domes are all open and to celebrate—just in time for the holidays—we are bringing back the 1/2 price gift membership sale. Members of the Friends of the Domes may purchase a gift membership for someone else at half price. This sale will run through April 2, the close of the Great Train Robbery train show in the Show Dome. Purchase gift memberships in the gift shop or call 414-257-5608.

You may buy as many gift memberships as you want and can choose from the following levels:

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<tr>
<th>Membership Level</th>
<th>Full Price</th>
<th>Half Price</th>
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Steampunk Faire: Gardens and Gears

Gardens & Gears: "Steampunk Faire" returns to the Conservatory for its 4th year, showcasing a gadget-filled garden party with creative artists, craftsmen, fashion designers, food, drinks, and live entertainment on Saturday, March 4.

Unique visions of an alternate past link the various exhibitors. Designs draw on the past with a futuristic vibe. Jewelry artists incorporate gears, old keys, and assorted industrial components in their pieces. Fashion designers use materials ranging from cotton sateen custom-printed with Victorian paintings to handcrafted leather to create alternative high fashion like that seen at gatherings such as TeslaCon. Milliners and other designers complete the looks with hats or accessories true to the Victorian era or Steampunk movement. For the do-it-yourself visitors, American Science and Surplus will have a booth featuring bags of gears and “not-really-welding goggles” for your own experimentation.

The Great Train Robbery train show sets the backdrop for this amazing and popular event that brings together the best of steam trains, sci-fi, technology, and creativity! A great “people watching” event for visitors of all ages!

When: Saturday, March 4, 2017 from 9 AM to 9 PM
Cost: Regular Admission Rates or free for FOD Members
Hearts Under Glass: Valentine’s Night Out
By Liz Fehring
Events Coordinator
Stop in before or after dinner and add the romantic atmosphere of the Domes at night to your Valentine’s Day plans. The Domes will remain open until 10:00 PM to compliment your evening out with someone special. We will offer cocktails and appetizers or desserts and after-dinner drinks for purchase.

Stroll the softly lit Domes, take a walk in the moonlit Desert Dome, spend a romantic moment in the tropics, and enjoy a spectacular light show during the Great Train Robbery Train Show in the Show Dome. Have your photo taken to commemorate this magical night with your special someone. Appetizers, desserts, and full bar available for purchase provided by Zilli’s Hospitality Group.

Call 414-257-5608 for more information or go to www.milwaukeedomes.org

When: Tuesday, February 14, 5:00 PM to 10:00 PM
Cost: Special Admission rates apply – membership passes and Mitchell Park Coupons are not valid for this event.

From the Director’s Chair
By Sandy Foloran
Director, Mitchell Park Domes
We’re on our way, as finally all three Conservatories are presently open and ready for business! With that welcome bit of news, we also have started the process of engagement with the Domes Advisory Task Force put in place by the County Board of Supervisors this past fall. The first meeting was held mid-October. William Lynch (the appointed chairman) set the agenda and tone for the year to come.

The committee is challenged with the task of vetting different options for the future of the Conservatory. These options run the gamut given that nothing is off the table for consideration. After thorough research and reporting by both the County and Graef (the acting consultants secured and hired to help oversee this phase of work), a cost will be calculated for each of the final options.

Committee members will have the opportunity to connect and engage with community groups, business organizations, agencies, and the wider community to share these options for feedback and input. All meeting notes, reports, and presentations will be posted publicly for everyone to access. After public dialogue and review of survey results, a report will be generated to share with both the County Executive and the Board of Supervisors for discussion. This process is slated to take about one year.

Whether you feel it’s time for a new conservatory facility, a full restoration of the present one, or a combination of both, this is your chance to look at the options that will be brought forward and voice your opinion. It’s an important part of the process in order to secure the legacy of this Conservatory and serve the next generation of visitors and residents. We are making history!

2017 Train Show in the Show Dome “The Great Train Robbery”
Partners, little ladies, sheriffs—no one will want to miss this! We’re bringing the wild west to vivid life in the Show Dome for our “Great Train Robbery” wild west themed train show! Four G-Scale train tracks will run concurrently through a wild western setting. Amongst canyons, towns, and southwestern rock formations, you will see western-themed plants such as Red Rooster grass and Cuphea ‘Dynamite’ with small red flowers that look like sticks of dynamite. Watch our trains avoid evil bandits as they travel past dwarf Azalea trees in pinks and reds as well as small pots of Asparagus fern that resemble tumbleweeds.

And for more trains… Visit the All-Scale Train Exhibit*
Masters of train layouts and hobbyists will fill the lobby once again Saturday, February 11 and Sunday, February 12, 2017 from 9 AM to 4 PM. See collectible displays from the tiniest z-scale trains to models large enough for adults to ride.

This popular exhibit draws all generations to the Conservatory with detail-oriented train layouts presented by train club members from all over Wisconsin. Bring the whole family to discover the world of trains and meet collectors who share their decades of experience and their personal inventories.
The Christmas Cactus “Schlumbergera”

By Peter Smiley  
FOD Board Member

While Poinsettias and Amaryllis certainly are showy while in flower, both can be somewhat difficult to convince to re-flower. Not so with the Christmas Cactus (more formally “Schlumbergera” or “Zygocactus”). Unlike the other holiday horticultural staples, these plants can flower three times a year or more with proper care!

Unlike their spiky desert cousins, these cactus come from tropical forests where they can be found growing in the crooks of trees or on shady rocks, where their colorful flowers attract hummingbirds. All you need to grow these tropical jewels is: fast draining potting mix (allowed to just dry between watering); bright, indirect light; and standard household temperatures. They also love to spend Wisconsin’s frost free months outdoors and will often flower twice or more in the summer, just give them the same light as hostas.

These cacti flush with flowers every time the nighttime temperature drops below 55 degrees for more than 2 weeks. Once buds appear, they will usually flower within 3-4 weeks, so if you aim for a late December flowering, make sure their cold treatment starts in early November. Happy growing!

Gifts Under Glass

Shop the Domes Gift Shop this Holiday Season!

The Gift Shop at the Domes has great gifts for everyone on your list. Check out our fabulous selection of beautiful hand-made jewelry, artwork, plants, and books! Someone on your list hard to shop for? We have easy-to-love puzzles, mugs, pint glasses, candles, and even locally-made candy. Plus toys, books, and stuffed animals for kids! Or take advantage of our special on gift memberships—Members can purchase additional memberships as gifts for 50% off! FOD Members receive 10% off all purchases. All purchases benefit the Mitchell Park Horticultural Conservatory.
From the President
By Roger Krawiecki
President, Friends of the Domes

I am very pleased that all 3 domes are now open. It felt so good to walk through all of them again. It was a welcoming surprise to see the cycad blooming in the Desert Dome. The color is so vibrant, some people might not believe it’s real! The birds in the Tropical Dome have been very active. They are definitely very happy to be in there.

The official process determining the future of the Domes is under way. I was selected by the County Board to be on the Domes Advisory Task force. The first meeting was held on October 12 at the Domes. Our first meeting was 3 hours long. It will take time to get the FOD board informed as to what is happening. A lot of research is needed to determine what can be done and what will be the most acceptable to Milwaukee County residents. We have some time because the temporary measure of putting up the mesh has an estimated life of 5 years. I am honored to represent the Friends of the Domes on the task force.

This past fall, the Friends scheduled 3 wellness talks, thanks to board member V. Shrinivas Murthy, MBBS, MD, PhD. I attended “What Should I Eat Every Day”. It was very eye-opening. Dr. Murthy covered a lot of information. Thanks to his lovely wife for helping him prepare some wonderful Indian food. No one left disappointed. Please be sure to attend future Friends classes—you will have a great time while supporting the Domes.

Speaking of healthy food, the Milwaukee Winter Farmers Market is back in the Annex on Saturday mornings 9:00 to 1:00. If you have never attended, please come and check it out. The market includes only the best producers from all of the summer markets. I am positive you will find something delightful to take home.

Don’t forget that the Friends always needs volunteers. Even if you can only commit to once or twice a year, it will help fill in gaps. Sign up on our website.

The theme of the holiday show this year is “Not a Creature was Stirring”. Always one of the highlights of the year and a time to reflect how fortunate we are to have such a magical place as the Domes. Wishing everyone a safe holiday season.

If you have any questions or suggestions regarding the Friends or the Domes, please reach out to me. You can contact me by phone, at 414-384-0161 or by email at rjkrawiecki@gmail.com.

Would you like to Receive your newsletter electronically?

Receiving your newsletter electronically saves the Friends money which can be spent on other projects and reduces waste. If you would prefer to receive future issues of our newsletters electronically, please email Sally at friendsofthedomes@gmail.com to indicate your preference.

Save The Date:
Very Fairy Princess Day
Mark your calendars—April 22 the Domes will once again become an enchanted fairy land for little princesses, princes, fairies, elves, and other mystical creatures! See the “Spring 2017” newsletter or our website for details!

Mitchell Park Conservatory’s Designation as an “Endangered Landmark”

A few months ago, the Domes once again made the news. The National Trust for Historic Preservation added the Conservatory to their list of Eleven Most Endangered Historic Places. We did not solicit this designation. The Milwaukee Preservation Alliance nominated the Domes because of their unique conidial shape, architectural integrity, and engineering.

The Society will not be assisting with or funding any efforts. Hopefully, the national attention this designation drew will provide positive benefits in the future. This line from their website sums up their intentions: “The National Trust’s experience championing Modernist resources, and ability to communicate with a national network of people who are passionate about this style of architecture, can help the community identify a preservation solution for the Domes.”

We also want everyone to know that donations made to the Endangered Landmark Preservation Society (even if in the name of the Domes) do NOT go to the Domes or toward preserving or repairing the Domes.

Amazon Smile

Many of our members will do at least some of their holiday shopping on Amazon this year. Why not let your Amazon purchases help us to help the Domes? Please select the Friends of the Domes as your charity of choice on Amazon Smile! #StartWithaSmile at smile.amazon.com/ch/39-1727792

For more details, go to Amazon.com and search Amazon Smile.
What will happen to pavers in the future?

Whether you are considering buying a paver or are wondering about one already in the Domes, please be assured—A place will be made for all new and existing pavers in any conservatory renovation or reconstruction plans.

MAKE A PERMANENT MARK AT THE DOMES WITH AN ENGRAVED PAVER

The Friends of the Domes is pleased to offer a personalized, permanent way to share a special message in the Mitchell Park Conservatory. Say: I REMEMBER, THANK YOU, IN MEMORY OF, or simply put your name on a brick to show your support of the Conservatory.

Pavers are 8 inches by 4 inches. Cost $125 each. Please mail this form with your payment to: Friends of the Domes 524 S. Layton Blvd., Milwaukee, WI 53215

Engraving request: Up to 13 characters per line, 1 to 3 lines. Please print.

Name: __________________________________________ Phone: __________________________

Email Address: _________________________________

Address: _______________________________________________________________________

Payment: Please enclose check payable to Friends of the Domes or provide credit card information. Your purchase is a tax deductible donation under IRS 501(C)3.

Name on Card: __________________________________________

Card Number: __________________________ Expiration Date: ____/____ CSV Code: _____

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Brighten Those Cold Winter Days—Volunteer with Us!

Interested in having fun during the cold winter months? You don’t have to stay bundled up in the house. Come to a warm environment, surrounded by wonderful plants and flowers. Participate in family oriented activities and work with great people. Become a volunteer at the Mitchell Park Domes. Opportunities include helping at events like: Ghosts Under Glass, New Year’s Eve, Winter Farmer’s Market, Green Living Festival, and Art in the Green; lending a hand in: the gift shop or Education center; or becoming a: Resource Keeper, Phenology Recorder, or Path Patrol volunteer.

To become a volunteer, go to our website www.milwaukeedomes.org click Volunteer at the top and fill out the volunteer information form.
Orchids: From the Treetops to Your Home

By Marian French
Horticulturist—Desert Dome

Just as winter begins to take hold outside in Wisconsin, it really helps to have a beautiful, delicate living plant in the window to bring you some blooming joy. Orchid flowers are an exotic embodiment of the tropics and knowing where they come from can help us give them the conditions they need to keep blooming year after year.

While orchids can be found on almost every continent, most of the species we grow indoors are from the tropical rainforests of the world where they grow as epiphytes. The word epiphyte means “on plant” and refers to the habit of growing on another plant or tree instead of in soil. In the dense jungle, space on the forest floor can be at a premium, and not much light or nutrients would be available to a little plant on the ground. Epiphytic orchids grow higher up in the treetops, usually nestled in the crook of a tree branch, at just the right height to get sunlight, rainwater, and air movement. Although they are not in soil, they receive nutrition from whatever debris collects near their roots, which could be anything from dead leaves to bird droppings. And because they obtain their own nutrients and simply attach to the bark of the host tree, epiphytes are not considered parasites.

If you take a close look at the roots of a potted orchid, you will see that they are very different from the roots of other houseplants. These roots are covered in a thick, spongy skin called velamen, which gives them a whitish color. The velamen helps seal in moisture that is inside the root tissue and absorb any outside water from rain or humidity. This coating is also very good at clinging to different surfaces that the roots encounter, securing the orchid in place on its tree, cliff, or even its growing pot.

If you imagine yourself sitting in the branches of a rainforest tree, it is easy to understand what an orchid might need in a household setting. The light should be bright but not direct, because there is always shade from above. The water should come frequently but, because they are up high, the plant should not remain soggy or waterlogged. Because their roots are so well adapted to growing through plant debris in the open air, most cultivated orchids should be grown in a special mix of ground bark that allows swift drainage and in a pot with many holes in the bottom. The air should be humid and warm, with no drafts or dry heat. Feed often but at a weak strength, like the steady nutrition they would get from the slowly decaying debris around their roots.

One walk around the Tropical Dome and you can see perhaps a couple dozen species of orchids, out of the over twenty thousand known in the world. Enjoy their radically different shapes and scents, and as you gaze past them into the green canopy, try and visualize the distant land they might call home.

Beautiful Orchids Available in Our Gift Shop!

We hope this article has inspired you to bring the beauty of orchids into your home! Our gift shop carries a variety of healthy, affordable orchids and other plants.
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Darlene Winter  Volunteer Coordinator

Upcoming Events

Saturdays Through April 8**....................... Winter Farmer’s Market
December 31 ........................................ New Year’s Eve Family Celebration*
February 5 .............................................. Bonsai Silhouette Show
February 11-12 .................................... All Scale Train Exhibit (Lobby)
February 14 .......................................... Hearts Under Glass*
March 4 .................................................. Gardens and Gears Steampunk Event
March 19 ................................................. Green Living Equinox Celebration
April 22 .................................................. Very Fairy Princess Day
May 6-7 .................................................... Art in the Green*

* Sponsored by Friends of the Domes; special admission rates apply
** Winter Farmer’s Market will not be held on November 26, December 24, or December 31.