



Vine LINE



Fall 2023

Learn about the updates we're making in the Japanese Garden. Get the buzz on bee houses. Press your own plants.



Hello, My Fellow Plant Enthusiast!

I hope you are all enjoying the wonderful fall weather thus far. Every year about this time I find myself preaching to everyone that this is the best time to plant! In the spring, after months of the cold and dismal weather, everyone is motivated and full of spring planting fever. In fall it seems most folks, myself included, are ready for a season of rest, renewal, coziness, and warm drinks. Yet for those of us willing to wield a shovel and trowel, fall planting has many rewards for our plants. This is due largely to the fact that the roots will continue to grow and be active long after the above ground portion of the plant has gone dormant. Imagine your garden next August, when the high temps and southern droughts start to hit. Plants that have had the advantage of growing roots and establishing an extra few months will be tougher, bigger, and put on more of a show for you to enjoy. We typically plant all the way up until Thanksgiving, and even into Mid-December depending on the year. I do take one exception however, when planting things that are just barely zone 7 hardy; those may be best planted in the spring when they have months of the temperatures they prefer ahead of them.

I would say Fall is my favorite season, but the truth is my favorite season is typically whichever one we are in. Each season has its own treasures to behold, but fall does seem to have a special intimacy to it. Warm drinks, warm colors on the trees, warm fires outside, warm meals throughout the holidays, and hopefully warm conversations with friends and loved ones. As far as horticulture goes, there is a saying that in fall each leaf becomes a flower, and I agree. As I write this on Halloween week, the Black Gums, Dogwood, Sassafras, and Sourwoods have started showing their lovely hues of red and orange while Tulip Poplars and Buckeyes provide a wonderful contrast with their bright yellow foliage, and the maples are just starting to give us a bit of orange and red. Asters are still showing off their purple flowers and the seedheads of our native grasses are as vibrant as ever. If you want a late season combo that is really spectacular, try planting a purple blooming aster (Raydon's favorite is a sure favorite) next to *Amsonia hubrichtii* and *Muhlenbergia capillaris*. One grass I've fallen in love with, and that is new to me, is the *Muhlenbergia rigens* in our Monarch Meadow in the renovated arboretum space. This Muhly was chosen for us by designer Claudia West, and it has been a showstopper in the late season, so much so that I had to buy some extras to have available for you all at our plant sales!

I hope you all enjoy these staff articles as much as I did! I am truly blessed as Director of Horticulture to work with such an amazing, hardworking, creative, and passionate team. These folks pour their heart and souls into these gardens each and everyday. I encourage you all to come see the beauty the fall has to offer that has been brought about by the hard work and labor of our wonderful team. We want nothing more than to share the beauty of nature with you!

Happy fall y'all!

Daniel Drose

MBG Director of Horticulture



Japanese Garden Renovations

By Robin Howell, Curator of the Japanese and Asian Gardens

That time of year has come around when I've been asked to write an article for the Vine Line. Normally, writing is not my favorite horticulture activity, although I am better than my teenage self, procrastinating over my paper on Julius Caesar until just the day before it is due. However, I'm enjoying writing this article due to the history we are creating in the Japanese Garden.

We are at different stages for three projects that we hope to have completed by the spring of 2025. The bridge and spillway at the back of the lake was our first project due to safety. Our bridge of wooden timbers was degrading and needing replacement. The issue was erosion around the bridge and the creek channel lined with concrete. The concrete had many cracks, causing water to run under the concrete, eroding the soil underneath.

In August 2022, work began with the wood timbers being removed and a partial dam erected to divert water flow to pour concrete. Over five yards of concrete was used to shore up leaks in the spillway. Two massive stones were set for the new bridge, and other large rocks were re-positioned as part of the new landscaping. Two new open-weave bamboo handrails and paving completed the construction but not the work. Planting began in the fall of 2022 with the addition of a *Viredis* Japanese Maple, hostas, ferns, and azaleas.

Planting continued in 2023 with more ferns, toad lily, and spike moss. With major construction complete on one project, another job ushered in 2023. The Moongazing Pavilion was in desperate need of new shingles and water damage to exposed beams. After the cedar shingles were replaced in kind and the beams repaired and painted, a new concrete floor was on the agenda. The concrete was cracked and was replaced with a new concrete pad with a beautiful inlay design. The columns were refurbished, and ceiling fans and new benches were added as the finishing touches. This project will be completed in the fall of 2024 once the area is landscaped.

The last project, and the one in the earliest stage, is the Japanese Garden entrance. This will involve removing most of the plant material around it and redesigning the entry. The current fence will be removed, and the gate will be enlarged to allow vehicle traffic to pass through since the gravel path will be reconfigured as a footpath. The plant removal has begun, with most material removed inside the gate. The timeline is for construction to begin in December, and re-landscaping will occur in March 2024. Much of this great work has been and will be done by outside contractors, staff, and volunteers. I want to give a personal thank you to John Powell, a Japanese garden designer out of Texas, who has helped immensely with advice and design for all of our current projects in the Japanese Garden. We hope you will come out and explore the Garden and enjoy all the changes we are implementing!































The Buzz on Bee Houses – Creating Habitat for Native Bees

By Hannah Hooks, My Big Backyard Horticulturist

Around the Memphis Botanic Garden, you might notice a few house shaped boxes like the one below. You also may have wondered what they were for, I sure did. These are bee houses! In My Big Backyard (our family garden), we are in the process of revamping our bee houses that have been in use for several years. This led me to do some research on the best way to create and maintain bee habitats.

Bee houses are one way that people can support native solitary bees. Solitary bees do not form colonies like honey bees do, rather they nest individually in the ground, dead wood, or hollow debris. There are over 3,600 species of native bees in North America. These bees are important pollinators and are needed for seeds and fruits to develop. A bee's foraging range depends on the size of the bee. Smaller bees tend to stay close to home base, ranging a few city blocks, whereas larger bees might travel several miles from their nesting sites. With continued urbanization, there has been a decrease in natural habitat for cavity nesting bees. One way to aid in the conservation of native bees is to offer substitute habitat such as bee houses.

When a bee occupies a nesting hole, they modify it by adding leaves and glandular secretions. They create a chamber for each egg. Every chamber contains one egg along with enough nectar and pollen for the eggs development. A solitary bee will choose a nesting hole based on its own body size.

In order to mimic natural nesting sites with bee houses, untreated wood and natural materials should be used to build them. There are two main ways that are used in making these houses. The first way is taking a block of wood and drilling holes into it for the bees to nest in. The holes should be between 3/32" and