

# ART & NATURE PARK



## UPDATES

The new Pollinator Meadow will become a beautiful habitat for native pollinator insects and other wildlife.

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**By Jonathan Wright**

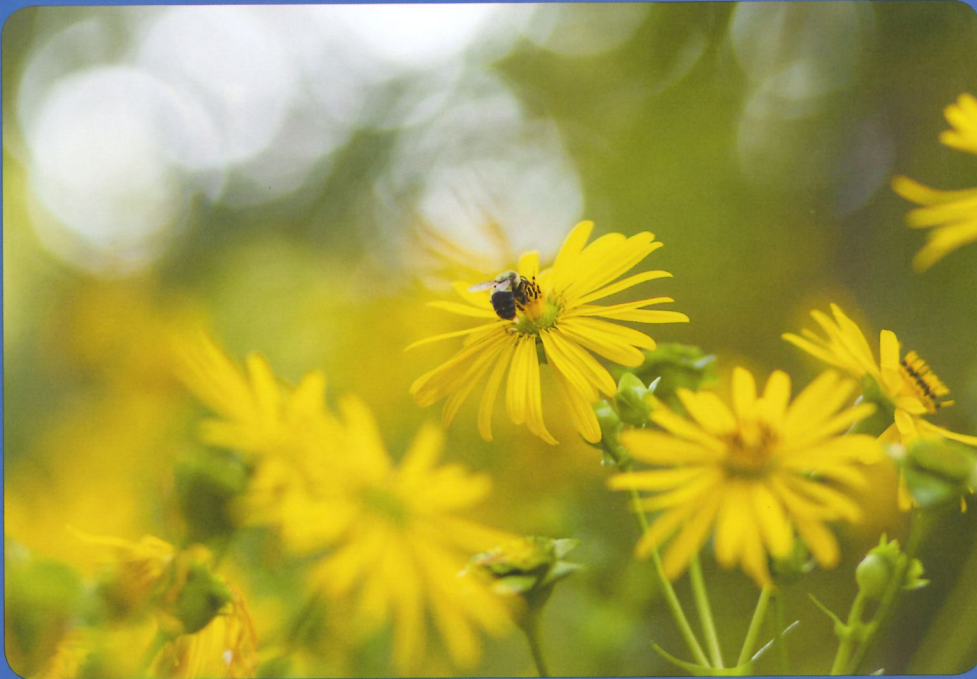
*The Ruth Lilly Deputy Director  
of Horticulture & Natural Resources*

You may have noticed some recent activity in and around The Virginia B. Fairbanks Art and Nature Park: 100 Acres. In April, we announced the progress we've made on Fairbanks Park initiatives. Our master land use plan, developed with Land Collective of Philadelphia and approved by our Board of Trustees in 2017, called for many exciting enhancements.

The Richard M. Fairbanks Foundation has honored us with a \$10 million grant to support this new phase. Plans are underway for improvements to art, trails, parking, and nature conservation. The 10-year grant commitment will help maximize use of the 100-acre reserve, which is one of the largest art and nature parks in the country.

Funding will support bike paths and walking trails to better connect the park to the Central Canal Towpath and Newfields' upper campus. Additional parking, security, and restrooms will support increasing numbers of visitors. Expect a children's sculpture and ecological upgrades. These changes will help position the park, which is free to the public, to be sustainable over the long-term by increasing capacity for events such as film screenings, concerts, festivals, and summer camps. It will also create incentives for new donors to support future art commissions.





Indiana native plant: *Silphium perfoliatum*, cup plant

### Here are some things you can expect to see:

There will be improved walking and bicycle access to our whole campus and Fairbanks Park. With support from the Fairbanks Foundation and a matching grant from the Indianapolis Department of Public Works, we'll be installing multiuse paths along 38th Street and Michigan Road. These will connect to existing sidewalks, so whether you arrive by bus, or are crossing over from a neighboring community, you'll have safe and accessible pathways.

Once the paths are completed, anyone will be able to safely ride or walk from the bus stops and proceed north along Michigan Road into Fairbanks Park. We're also working with the Indianapolis Cultural Trail to install an Indiana Pacers Bikeshare station along the towpath, which will have a dock opposite Waller Bridge.

One of the most visible projects in Phase One is the creation of a 65,000-square-foot Pollinator Meadow.

Maybe you noticed the clearing between the lake and the Lilly House. We began eliminating invasive plant species in March and testing varieties of native flora in corners of this clearing. Our plan is to methodically eradicate all invasive species in preparation for planting thousands of native trees, shrubs, grasses, and wildflowers. Come watch it grow and evolve over

the years into what we hope will be one of the most diverse and beautiful meadow plantings in the state.

While this new meadow will be visually stunning, the most rewarding feature will be the habitat it offers to wildlife, especially native pollinator insects. A generous gift from Ed Fehnel helped us jump-start this project, and we'll have additional funding from the Fairbanks Foundation.

Another project underway this fall is the stabilization of the path between the lake and the White River along our northern boundary. This area has been eroding and creating a hazard for years. Additional funding from the Nina Mason Pulliam Charitable Trust has allowed us to address these safety concerns. We'll be widening the path to make it safe for guests to traverse the entire lake.

Imagine yourself standing on the narrow strip of land, taking in the lake on one side and watching the river flowing by on the other. We'll also be removing all the invasive honeysuckle and other weedy species and establishing a more diverse, stable habitat. When we open the completed path in the summer of 2020, it will be a place to observe how the pristine beauty of nature intersects with a playful work of art. There's so much more to talk about than I can fit into one article, so expect more announcements soon. Please visit Fairbanks Park often to see the progress. ●