History, Mission, and Vision for the Future of the UA Arboretum

Monica H. Moss Watkins
History

• Established in 1958
  – Land donated by the federal government
  – Located next to VA

• Unique resource
  – UA research and academics
  – Field trips for local schools
  – Public recreation and relaxation

• Open to the public
  – Free
  – 8 am - sunset
Mission

• The University of Alabama Arboretum is a scientific institution that engages in teaching, research, and service with primary emphasis on the ecology and biodiversity of Alabama.

• The Arboretum maintains a plant collection containing native species and their exotic relatives, educational reference specimens, and plants of global conservation concern.

• The Arboretum’s programs promote management, conservation, and sustainable use of natural resources and appreciation of nature through recreational activities and artistic endeavors.
Teaching, Research, & Service

The Arboretum maintains plant collections for botanical education and appreciation
- native woodlands
- wildflower garden
- collection of exotic trees
- greenhouses
- sustainable garden
- children’s garden

Other features include
- 2.5 miles of hiking trails
- 50 seat outdoor amphitheater
- 30 ft. tall tree platform

Sponsored by the Department of Biological Sciences in the College of Arts & Sciences
- coordinate with UA Museums on education and outreach programs
Current Improvements

- Facilities upgrades
- Rental reservations
- Education & Outreach
- Volunteer opportunities
Vision

• Enhance and expand the teaching, research, and outreach programs of the Arboretum while keeping the sense of place that has made it special

• Engage the local community as partners in Arboretum activities and programs

• Model and teach best practices in natural resource management, conservation, and sustainability

• Provide enhanced opportunities for appreciation of nature through the arts and recreation

• Become nationally recognized as a leader in hands-on science education and teacher training by serving a diverse audience through programs for all ages

• Develop a program for conserving plants native to Alabama and participate in national and international plant conservation efforts

• Achieve the highest level of accreditation through ArbNet, an international organization of arboreta
Focal Areas for Education & Outreach

- Technology
- Sustainability
- Experiential Learning

www.extension.harvard.edu

gesneriads.ua.edu/
Future Improvements

• New Greenhouses
• New Visitor Center
  – Rhizotron
  – Nature playground
  – Conservatory
• Covered outdoor event space
  – Outdoor chapel
  – Larger amphitheater
OUR VISION

Improvement of the Arboretum’s facilities will support our vision to enhance and expand teaching, research, and outreach programs and achieve national recognition as a leader in hands-on science education, teacher training, and plant conservation. The icons below indicate the amenities proposed and the dotted lines show location.

Existing Amenities

- RAILROAD
- DIRT ROAD
- TRAILS
- STREAM
- BUILDING
- BRIDGE

GARDENS

1. RHODODENDRON GARDEN
2. WILDFLOWER GARDEN
3. BOG GARDEN
4. 50TH ANNIVERSARY GARDEN
5. CHILDREN’S GARDEN
6. COMMUNITY GARDEN
7. BLACK BELT PARK

Timeline

- Immediate Concerns
- Short Term Goals
- Long Term Goals

Invasive Species Removal

An experienced contractor will bring invasive species to a level that can be maintained by Arboretum staff with assistance from students and volunteers.

Garden Shed

A new larger garden shed is required to store tools used by students and volunteers to maintain the children’s and community gardens.

Pollinator Garden

The Arboretum will participate in University efforts to establish habitat for bees and butterflies by planting native wildflowers.

Sustainable Garden Partnership

As the sustainable community garden outgrows its current space, this area will be available to continue efforts with additional partners from campus and the Tuscaloosa region.

Visitor Center and Conservatory

To support growth in our programs, the Arboretum requires an indoor space with exhibits, a large meeting lab, larger restrooms, and offices. An attached conservatory will house plants on public display.

European Garden

This new themed garden inspired by Tuscaloosa’s connection to will attract additional visitors and provide a unique experience.

Bunkhouse

Students will have a place to spend the night when conducting evening field studies. Visiting scholars will enjoy the tranquility of the Arboretum and the convenience of being in town.

New Greenhouse

A modern climate controlled greenhouse will replace the existing worn and outdated greenhouses to better support research and conservation efforts.

Pine Forest Citizen Science Research Plot

A research plot will be established in the existing pine forest. Students and members of the public will learn about the environment by collecting and comparing ecological data.

Handmade Forest Citizen Science Research Plot

A research plot will be established in the existing hardwood forest. Students and members of the public will learn about the environment by collecting and comparing ecological data.

Tractor Shed

The current storage shed does not meet the expected needs for additional equipment necessary for our expanded programs. Relocation of this shed will improve access to and aesthetics of the

Playscape and Gardens

A playspace for children inspired by and immersed in nature built for crawling, jumping, climbing, and splashing. The former shop foundation will be reused for a gazebo looking out on the playscape.

Asian Garden and Sculpture Trail

Inspired by gardens of Japan, this area will feature native southeastern and exotic Asian "sister" species of plants. Concrete footings for exhibition of student and professional sculpture.

Please note: This map is for conceptual purposes only and does not represent approved and funded projects. A detailed master plan will be developed in the next year to finalize improvements, timelines, and costs.
Plant Collection & Research

• Inventory
  – Additional species

• Research
  – Plant Conservation
  – Forest Ecology
  – Citizen Science

• Level III Accreditation
Long Term

• National Recognition
  – Hands-on Science Education
  – Native Plant Conservation
  – Level IV Accreditation
QUESTIONS?

Monica H. Moss Watkins
mhmwatkins@ua.edu
(205) 553-3278

www.alabamabirdingtrails.com