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Boerner Botanical Gardens Enters an Exciting New Chapter Under New Leadership

New leaders for Boerner Botanical Gardens and Friends of Boerner Botanical Gardens unite around a shared vision to invest in Boerner and position the Gardens for generations to come

MILWAUKEE, Wis. — September 1, 2026 — A new chapter is beginning at Boerner Botanical Gardens.

With new leadership at both Boerner Botanical Gardens and Friends of Boerner Botanical Gardens, the nearly century-old Gardens are looking toward an exciting future — one that builds upon Boerner’s remarkable history while making the investments necessary to ensure it thrives for generations to come.

Jennifer Gamez, Director of Boerner Botanical Gardens for Milwaukee County Parks, and Katie Bruner, Executive Director of Friends of Boerner Botanical Gardens, bring complementary expertise and a shared commitment to stewarding Boerner into its next era. Together, they are focused on strengthening the visitor experience, expanding education and community engagement, growing philanthropic support, and investing in the people, plants, programs and infrastructure that will shape Boerner’s future.

“Our role is not to reinvent what generations before us created, but to build upon it,” said Bruner. “We have inherited something extraordinary. Now it is our responsibility to make the investments today that ensure Boerner continues to flourish for the generations that follow us.”

One Boerner: Two Organizations, One Shared Vision

At the heart of this new chapter is a renewed commitment to the partnership between Milwaukee County Parks and Friends of Boerner Botanical Gardens and a simple philosophy: One Boerner.

While the County and Friends are two distinct organizations with different responsibilities, the community experiences one Boerner Botanical Gardens. One Boerner reflects a commitment to working from a shared vision, aligning priorities, expertise and resources around what is best for the Gardens and the people they serve.

Milwaukee County Parks brings public stewardship, horticultural expertise and responsibility for the Gardens and their infrastructure. Friends of Boerner Botanical Gardens brings philanthropy, membership, education, advocacy and community support. Together, the organizations can accomplish more for Boerner than either could independently.

“We have been entrusted with an incredible place,” said Gamez. “Our opportunity is to care for what we have been given while thoughtfully building what comes next. That takes partnership, investment and a community that believes in Boerner’s future.”

About Jennifer Gamez

Jennifer Gamez brings experience in horticulture, environmental restoration, education, volunteer management, project management, event planning and fundraising to her role as Director of Boerner Botanical Gardens. She holds a master’s degree in Environmental Studies and has spent her career creating opportunities for people to connect with the natural world.

At Boerner, Gamez is focused on enhancing the visitor experience through enriched plant displays, improvements to infrastructure and accessibility, and new events and experiences. Her vision is for Boerner to nurture both people and the natural world — a welcoming place where visitors can slow down, explore, learn and create memories.

“We want Boerner to be a place where children can discover their first love of flowers, families can create traditions, and visitors can find moments of peace and wonder,” said Gamez.

About Katie Bruner

Katie Bruner brings extensive experience in nonprofit leadership, fundraising strategy, organizational development and board engagement to her role as Executive Director of Friends of Boerner Botanical Gardens. She holds a Master of Public Administration with an emphasis in nonprofit management and has spent her career helping mission-driven organizations strengthen philanthropy, build sustainable systems and position themselves for long-term growth.

At Boerner, Bruner is focused on strengthening the Friends organization and expanding its capacity to support the Gardens through philanthropy, membership, education, advocacy and community engagement.

“This work is bigger than either one of us and will transcend our time at Boerner,” said Bruner. “Our responsibility is to make choices today that ensure there is an extraordinary Boerner Botanical Gardens waiting for people to discover 25, 50 and 100 years from now.”

Together, Gamez and Bruner are committed to building upon what previous generations entrusted to Boerner, investing in it thoughtfully today and ensuring the Gardens continue to inspire wonder, connect people with nature and create memories for generations to come.

About Boerner Botanical Gardens

Located in Whitnall Park, Boerner Botanical Gardens has welcomed generations of visitors since opening in 1939. Its historic formal gardens showcase thousands of plants and serve as a destination for horticulture, education, recreation and community connection.

About Friends of Boerner Botanical Gardens

Friends of Boerner Botanical Gardens is a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting and enhancing Boerner Botanical Gardens through education, advocacy, membership, philanthropy and community engagement. Working in partnership with Milwaukee County Parks, the Friends help ensure the Gardens continue to thrive as an important horticultural, educational and cultural resource for the community.

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