JULY 2019

TREE TOWER & CANOPY WALK

Hidden Lake Gardens of Michigan State University recently announced during its Reach For The Sky! event a new attraction that will be coming to the Tipton, Michigan, botanical garden and arboretum. The Tree Tower and Canopy Walk project is set to open in 2020, the 75th anniversary of Harry Fee’s gift of Hidden Lake Gardens to MSU.

Currently in the design and fundraising phases of the project, actual groundbreaking and site preparation work will commence this fall. The tree tower and canopy walk will then be pre-fabricated during the winter months, with the Canopy Walk set for construction and installation as soon as the winter weather breaks and opening by June 2020. The Tree Tower will begin construction and installation over the summer of 2020 with an anticipated opening of October 2020, just in time for fall foliage season.

The Tree Tower and Canopy Walk attraction will provide persons of any ability the opportunity to have a woodland and forest immersion experience.

- The 700 foot long canopy walk will take visitors through the tree canopy some 65 feet above the ground via the wheelchair friendly boardwalk and suspension bridge.
- The tree tower will be a 100 foot tall “climb” up into and above the trees via a wooden staircase. For visitors that cannot access stairs, the ADA compliant elevator – the only tree elevator of its kind - will move persons up and down the trees.
- Located along the Hikers Trail deep into the woodland, the ADA accessible trail will connect directly with nature providing an escape from the stresses of everyday life while improving general health and wellness of visitors naturally.

“…FOR THE BENEFIT AND EDUCATION OF THE PUBLIC.”
-Harry Fee in 1945

-This community collaborative project impacts Lenawee County and the Irish Hills region, while extending its reach through Jackson, Hillsdale, and Washtenaw counties drawing additional tourism to the area.
-Planning for the project is lead by the Hidden Lake Gardens Steering Committee members consisting of local leaders and MSU representatives including Allan Brittain, H. Ronald Griffith, Charles H. Gross, John C. Gruel, Scott Hill, Paul J. Pfeifer, Charles J. Reid, Sheila Dwyer Schwartz, and Jim Van Doren.
-Design of the project is coordinated through Robbie Oates and Alan Frye of Phoenix Experiential Designs which specializes in designing and installing towers, walks, and challenge courses in outdoor natural environments.

The tree tower and canopy walk will be a one of a kind visitor experience for Hidden Lake Gardens providing a full 360 degree bird’s-eye view of the arboretum, the Irish Hills, and possibly, on a clear sky day, portions of the Lenawee, Jackson, Washtenaw, and Hillsdale counties.

HLG hopes to attract a greater number and diversity of visitors with the addition of the new woodland tree experience, but also for visitors to encounter and discover the many other gardens, collections, resources and features at HLG.

ALAN FRYE,
PHOENIX EXPERIENTIAL DESIGNS

https://www.canr.msu.edu/hiddenlakegardens
TREE TOWER

The Tree Tower is designed in the pagoda architectural style to maintain an aura of peace and tranquility within the serene woodland setting along the Hikers Trail.

Each platform will allow visitors to see the trees from various heights while learning and observing tree life at various levels within the tree canopy.

Intended to be a climbing-the-staircase kind of experience, an elevator within the tree tower will provide access to the top of the tower for those visitors not able to ascend the stairs.

Once at the top, not only will the view be downward upon the tree canopy, but also outward over the distant and expansive views of the Irish Hills region.
CANOPY WALK

The Canopy Walk provides a 750 foot walking experience through the tree canopy while reaching heights of 65 feet above the ground and made accessible for people of any mobility by combining two boardwalk ramps and a suspension bridge.

EXPERIENCE NATURE FROM AN UNIQUE AND EXCITING PERSPECTIVE

The Tree Tower and Canopy Walk will inspire and motivate visitors to:

• Explore, discover, learn, and observe nature from the tree tops,
• Instill a sense of wonder and curiosity, especially in children, about the natural world.
• Dynamically interact with nature rather than passively observe their surroundings.
• Link time spent in nature with relief of stress and improvement of personal health and wellness.
• Realize the connectivity of forests and freshwater systems from a new perspective in order to encourage conservation of both of these natural resources.
• Uniquely view Hidden Lake Gardens and beyond: the lakes, the hills, the kettle holes, the farms, and, of course, the trees!
• Recognize the resource, destination, and tourist attraction that HLG is, and to return for unique and varied experiences with each season.
CONNECT WITH NATURE

Right: Immersion into Fall foliage color will be accessible to all along the Hikers Trail that leads visitors to the Tree Tower.

Below: Concept drawings of the boardwalk ramps leading to the suspension bridge.

AN UPCLOSE AND UPWARD EXPERIENCE

The view of the tree canopy looking skyward from the ground level at the proposed Tree Tower site. The tower and canopy walk will blend in naturally to the woodland environment having minimal construction impact on the ecology of the woodland environment.

COMMUNITY IMPACT PARTNERSHIP

Michigan State University and Lenawee Community Foundation are partnering with Hidden Lake Gardens to bring this exciting new attraction to the southeast and southcentral Michigan regions to impact education, recreation, and tourism.
VIEW FROM THE TREES

To view an animated interpretation of experiencing the canopy walk, suspension bridge, and boardwalk ramp, open the following link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BGf-OgHTpO4

PROJECT FUNDRAISING GOAL OF $2.2 MILLION:

- Design, construction, and installation of the tree tower and canopy walk.
- An elevator and accessible walks, paths, and trails accommodating the woodland nature connection for all.
- Wheelchair, walker, stroller, and wagon access.
- Interpretive signage enhancing the educational experiences throughout the four seasons.
- An elevated classroom within the canopy walk providing school groups learning opportunities in experiencing nature from an outdoor laboratory.
- Discovery programs for hands-on learning and feet-above-ground experiences.
- Activities encouraging nature as a method of reducing stress, increasing immunity defenses, and improving overall health and wellness.
- For information on supporting and funding Reach For The Sky:
  - Call 517-431-8044
  - Email hlg@msu.edu
  - Website HiddenLakeGardens.msu.edu