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### **Garden and Nature Tour**

Tour some of the area's finest gardens and learn from plant people who have been growing for years. A walk around a garden in Central Wisconsin with an experienced grower will teach you more than a three-foot stack of garden books ever could.

In addition to lush gardens, nature reserves and environmentally conscious organizations make Central Wisconsin an ideal oasis for outdoor enthusiasts. Feel free to mix and match our nature-focused attractions to suit the needs of your group. The Central Wisconsin Tourism Association will be happy to help assemble an itinerary based on interests and allotted time.

### **Day One Options**

Visit a natural sanctuary at **Rudolph Grotto Gardens and Wonder Cave**. Established in 1920, the Grotto Gardens consist of more than five acres with lush flowerbeds, meandering paths, copious shrines, a museum and quaint gift shop. Totalling one-fifth of a mile, the Wonder Cave is fashioned after the catacombs. Enjoy a one to two hour long tour, open Memorial Day through Labor Day. Reservations preferred.

Explore Wisconsin's largest forest nursery. **Griffith State Nursery** was established in the sand flats of Wisconsin Rapids in 1932. Producing billions of trees and wildlife shrub seedlings, Griffith State Nursery is open for guided tours Monday through Friday. Reservations required.

Tour the **Central Wisconsin Environmental Station (CWES)** in Amherst Junction to witness intermixing of nature and education. CWES, situated on glacial Sunset Lake, spans 200-acres and is managed by the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point College of Natural Resources. Hours of operation and tour offerings vary. Reservations required.

Immerse yourself in the environmental history of Wisconsin at the **Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame** in **Schmeckle Reserve**. The Hall of Fame highlights individuals who have made noteworthy contributions to conservation programming, public education and resource management ethics throughout the state of Wisconsin. Tours available Monday through Sunday. Reservations preferred.

Discover the ins-and-outs of solar electric, solar thermal, wind and alternative energy sources at **MREA Renew the Earth Institute** in Custer. This 4,200-square-foot facility situated on 20-acres focuses on renewable energy, sustainable living practices, efficiency and more. View the demonstration gardens, educational displays, workshop room or one of 20 demonstration systems. Guided tours vary in length and are available Monday through Friday or by appointment.

### Day Two Options

**Village Gardens** in Plover combines a greenhouse, café, gift shop, scenic seating areas and an abundance of flower varieties to foster an inviting, natural atmosphere. Their staff of certified gardeners will guide you through the greenhouse and gardens to get an inside look into the maintenance of perennials, annuals, hanging baskets and more. Open seasonally April through October. Reservations required and tour offerings vary.

Leisurely stroll on 20-acres past towering pines, along a stream and through wetlands to discover the unique connection between nature and art at the **Stevens Point Sculpture Park**, situated on the 26-mile **Green Circle Trail**. Open daily year-round.

Appreciate the intermixing of nature and wildlife at **Wildwood Zoo** in Marshfield. Enjoy their newest JP Adler Kodiak Bear exhibit which opened in October of 2015. Gain an insider perspective on what happens behind the scenes with an hour long zookeeper-guided tour, available by appointment year round.

Walk through an outdoor park with artistic flair. At **Jurustic Park** in Marshfield, view metal mythical swamp creatures said to have existed near McMillan Wildlife Marsh in the Iron Age. In addition to seeing oversized flying dragons, plants and more, visit the **on-site studio** of creator Nancy Wynia. Tours are one-half hour to one hour and reservations are required.

**Brandl Garden** in Marshfield covers what once was a gravel, sand and excavating yard. The garden spans nearly three acres and includes ponds, perennials and water features. Tours offered by appointment only.

See 32 varieties of historical rose plants, some dating back to the year 1500 AD, at **Upham Mansion Heritage Rose Garden** in Marshfield. Some of the roses are ever blooming, some bloom once or twice during the summer, and one of them blooms in two colors. The Rose Garden is open June through September and tours are available by appointment.

**For group dining and lodging options, and to finalize your itinerary, contact a group tour specialist at the Central Wisconsin Tourism Association, 715-344-2556.**