



For Immediate Release - 2024 Spring Gardens News

Whistling Gardens Honoured - Prestigious Garden Tourism Person(s) Of The Year Award "International Garden Tourism Conference/Canadian Garden Council & Regional Innovation SWOTC Recognition"



(Wilsonville, Norfolk County Ontario Canada – April 15, 2024) *From corn field to botanical gardens...* Whistling Gardens, recently received two prestigious honours to recognize their "leadership, innovation, and business diversity" excellence.

The International Garden Tourism Conference held in Victoria, British Columbia, welcomed delegates from 13 countries, 41 gardens, 7 tourism organizations, 10 garden related organizations and 7 associations representing the global botanical garden community.

Whistling Gardens, Founder/Creator Darren Heimbecker and his wife Wanda, were featured

guest speakers sharing their garden diversity success at this international forum. This husband and wife team, were also honoured with the prestigious "Garden Tourism Person(s) of The Year" Leadership Award, by the Canadian Garden Council.

The awards recognized the couple's industry development roles, noting Darren Heimbecker's industry leadership in building Whistling Gardens, also as an educator through keynote and speaking engagements throughout Ontario, concert engagement, and his unique contribution as a Canadian Composer of new world music accompanying the day time [Musical Fountain Show](#) presentations and his three year development of the [Festival of Fountains – The Night Garden](#) introducing guests to a highly visual and immersive story telling experience through water, light to his original music compositions. Community collaboration, third party partnerships and volunteering as a municipal liaison, Wanda Heimbecker's achievements introduce botanical gardens diversity programming through client weddings and celebrations, children's programming, theatre, concerts, self-care nature medicinal wellness, horticulture programming, civic recognitions "1st Annual Immigrant Appreciation Day" while curating third party fundraisers, local business partnerships, the Year of the Garden Proclamation and establishing a regional [Tourism Hub](#) to lead guests to neighbouring restaurants, attractions, shopping and accommodations to boost area economic prosperity.



The Southwest Ontario Tourism Corporation recognized Whistling Gardens Festival of Fountains – The Night Garden as one of two finalists for their Innovator of The Year Award at the Southern Ontario Tourism Conference, held in March 2024. Recognition highlighted the artistry, use of international technology, economic impacts within a rural municipality and employment benefit representing over 100 artists and seasonal employees since inception.

Gardens Facts: Over 25 million people travel annually in North America to see gardens, and the global market of garden visitors exceeds 250 million. Research indicates that 46 per cent of garden visits result in an overnight stay, and the demographic of garden visitors includes all age cohorts. Destination British Columbia estimates the value of garden tourism in the Province of British Columbia alone

exceeds \$300 million annually. Latest research in the UK show that Garden Tourism generates almost £3 billion of economic impact. Gardens not only have a significant economic impact but also enhance the tourist experience of a destination, while providing positive social and health benefits.

Garden Tourism Awards – Canadian Garden Council: The Garden Tourism Awards are presented to organizations and individuals who have distinguished themselves in the development and promotion of garden experiences as tourism attractions and motivators. The awards are proudly organized by the Canadian Garden Council with recipients being selected by a jury and sponsored by Enterprise Canada.

About Whistling Gardens: *From corn field...* Explore Ontario's only privately owned multi award winning Botanical Gardens. The gardens display over 4,000 different plants throughout our 22 acres, offering 4 km of accessible walking trails, daily musical fountain show featuring 110 water jets choreographed to original music, exotic bird aviary, prescheduled group education tours, family character adventures, concerts, gardening and wellness workshops, garden art exhibits, picnics and cameras are welcome too! Over 1,200 different conifers are featured and it is one of the largest public collections in North America. Throughout late May and June, North America's largest public collection of peonies showcases 1,300+ different varieties blooming in a dazzling showcase of colours.

The [Festival of Fountains – The Night Garden](#) evening performances introduce an interpretive storytelling experience of music, water, and lighting create a magical theatrical experience. Whistling Gardens is the first in Canada to use special computerized pumps to create dazzling effects. The computerized musical fountain program is likely the largest in the country! Book early, due to sold out performances, with tickets to be released in May! **SHOP!** The rare, beautiful and one of a kind and ornamental plants can be found at the garden centre which also features local artisan works.

Whistling Gardens 2024 Opening Dates!

Garden Centre & Botanical Gardens May 4th <https://whistlinggardens.ca/plan-your-visit/hours-map/>

Daytime Fountain Show Starts May 18th <https://whistlinggardens.ca/the-gardens/the-fountains/>

Festival of Fountains August 24th <https://whistlinggardens.ca/festivaloffountains/>

Events – Horticulture & Wellness Workshops, Concerts, Family Theatre Adventures <https://whistlinggardens.ca/events/month/2024-05/>

Visit www.whistlinggardens.ca

For more information, interviews, and high resolution artwork please contact:

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