

PIONEERLOCAL

Nature provides main attraction at Arboretum's Fall Color Festival

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Celebrations usually require a lot of decorations. But nature has provided all the color this month's festival at the Morton Arboretum needs.

The Arboretum's Fall Color Festival is soon to begin, offering all sorts of ways for families to enjoy this annual autumn display. With thousands of trees from more than 40 countries, there is plenty of color to be enjoyed in the next few weeks.



The Morton Arboretum's Fall Color Festival features an array of activities for the whole family as well as chances to spot the colorful fall foliage. Photography provided by George Street Photo and Video.



**The highlight of fall festivals is the ever-changing leaves.
Photography provided by George Street Photo and Video.**

Meadow Lake is home this time of year to a collection of scarecrows, each designed by an area Girl Scout troop. Visitors will see Count Battula, Hannah Plantannah and others along the trail from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. through Oct. 26.

"They've really outdone themselves this year," said Gina Tedesco, Arboretum spokesperson.

Tedesco said Scarecrow Trail has become an attraction for all ages, and a highlight of the Fall Color Festival.

"Pumpkin Play" invites young visitors to discover all there is to know about this popular autumn orb. They'll dig inside, count the seeds and can even buy a pumpkin to decorate. "Pumpkin Play" takes place in the Children's Garden from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on weekends in October.

While visiting the Children's Garden, youngsters can take part in "Beneficial Bats," an activity that will teach them that these flying creatures aren't just creepy, they also are an important part of our ecosystem. Children will learn about the types of bats that live in Illinois and make a bat finger puppet to take home. Drop in between 1 and 4 p.m. on weekends through October.

Fall is a season that everyone enjoys, and the Arboretum hasn't forgotten the adults in planning activities for its autumn festival.

Theater hikes have become a popular way for visitors to take in a night of theater while enjoying the backdrop of the Arboretum. This season, the featured presentation is "Dracula." The night itself becomes part of the production as the audience hikes from scene to scene.

"The evening's long shadows add to the overall impressionistic quality of the show itself," Tedesco said.

Because it's a little scary, this show is not recommended for visitors younger than 8. Call (630) 725-2066 for tickets.

The Bonterra vineyards will share the fruits of their labor during free wine tastings from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on weekends through October, and the Fall Garden Marketplace, open weekends and Wednesdays, invites visitors to take home a bit of fall for themselves. An array of garden accents will be sold.

Garden accents, musical instruments and more will be part of an exhibit from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Oct. 18 and 19 in the special events room of the Visitors Center. A group of artists has created all sorts of objects and works of art from gourds.

Of course, the highlight of the Festival is the ever-changing leaves. Ed Hedborn, Arboretum Color Scout, is on the lookout for the daily changes in the arboretum's palette. Visitors can find out what to expect by calling Hedborn's Bloom 'n Color Hotline, (630) 719-7955, for a weekly update.

Located at Interstate 88 and Route 53 in Lisle, the Arboretum boasts 1,700 acres of trees, shrubs and other plants from all over the world. The Arboretum is open daily from 7 a.m. until sunset. The Children's Garden is open from 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. through October, and 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., November through February.

Admission, which includes the Children's Garden, is \$9, \$8 seniors, \$6 ages 3-17. Discounted rates are offered on Wednesdays and parking is free.