

Another addition to the garden is the treehouse, which will provide a connection to the children's garden. The treehouse climbs 25 feet into the tree canopy while maintaining a 1:12 slope to ensure access to all visitors. Many of the play activities spill into the underside of the tree house and occupy the veiled rooms below.

Barrett said the treehouse will be "an elevated, boardwalk type of structure that will be fully accessible, which differentiates it from a lot of canopy experiences for children, so it will be for everyone."

"The elevated boardwalk will hug the tree line at the back of the ravine, so you'll have views out that way and into the canopy," Barrett said. "One

SC Botanical Garden adding new features

BY GREG OLIVER
THE JOURNAL

CLEMSON — The South Carolina Botanical Garden has since grown into a 295-acre garden and natural area open every day of the year and attracting more than 750,000 visitors annually.

Officials are hoping the growth continues with new projects like the McBride Aquatic Garden and Gazebo.

"This ornate and beautiful gazebo allows visitors, especially children, the opportunity to walk toward the center of our duck pond and interact with fish, turtles and ducks and no doubt will become a destination for many wedding portraits and events," garden director Patrick McMillan said. "This is one of the key additions and improvements to our children's garden."

Assistant director Shannon Barrett said the gazebo will be a popular attraction for visitors.

"I think people will get married under it," Barrett said.

The Susan K. Barr Pollinator Garden was installed last summer, and McMillan said it is effective to teach "the importance of pollinators, as well as being a model for how our own home landscapes can enhance the life we see around us."

"We are incredibly excited to see these two projects brought to completion and, as always, strive to provide a safe, enjoyable and beautiful landscape that serves as a garden for life," he said.



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South Carolina Botanical Garden board chair Joe Turner and landscape architect Shannon Barrett pose for a portrait in front of the garden's brand-new gazebo.

of the cool things is that this is a really important intersection of the garden, with the Hunt Cabin, which is also one of our landmarks and is the end of our natural heritage garden trail, so you have that duck pond, which is one of our most visited spaces."

The garden offers classes, guided walks and festivals, among other activities. The garden offers 4 miles of trails, a museum and conference center.

"We get a lot of parents and grandparents coming to visit," she said. "Aside

from the athletic complex, this is the second most visited place in Clemson."

After flooding resulted in extensive damage to the garden in 2012, Barrett said the outpouring of volunteerism and donations "was amazing."

"They were not only able to repair the damage, but also expand some of the garden areas that had been flooded out," Barrett said. "As much as it was a terrible catastrophe for the community and really for us, those relationships we built during that time for people wanting to save and help a place that's

near and dear to them. It was really just something to see."

Clemson businessman Joe Turner, who chairs the South Carolina Botanical Garden board, said he is excited about plans to enhance the garden.

"We're really excited about the children's garden and really believe at some point, if not even now, that it will be the gem of the garden," Turner said. "When we get the treehouse in here, it will really be just a splendid place for families to come and bring their children. It is a splendid place, and it's going to be even better."

Records show visitors who have come from as far as California and Hawaii, as well as internationally from Turkey, Belgium, the Philippines and other countries. But Turner said the garden has had a significant influence on both Clemson and the state.

Mayor pro tem John Ducworth said the garden plays a major role in the economy of Clemson.

"The garden has an impact to our retailers, merchants, restaurants and vendors," Ducworth said.

Mayor J.C. Cook said he has seen the garden's impact firsthand.

"Our visitors from England (who stayed with the Cooks several months ago), the first place they went when they came here was the botanical garden," Cook said.