

# Toledo Botanical Garden Highlights



## Messages for Interpretation

Timeless layers of formal garden design blend with natural and cultural history to make Toledo Botanical Garden unique.

- Each visit offers a new experience as beauty unfolds through seasonal landscapes.
- Native restoration initiatives compliment the garden and enhance biodiversity.
- Ideas for home and yard can be discovered at this Metropark.
- TBG's history and volunteerism resonate with community involvement.

## What's in the Name?

Formerly named Crosby Gardens and George P Crosby Park for the man who donated the land, this park has been called Toledo Botanical Garden since 1989.

## Natural and Human History

TBG is a museum of plants, offering visitors display gardens, plant and tree collections, and native and restored areas. Sometimes at TBG, native and cultivated species grow side by side, which makes an excellent learning comparison. The great variety here also creates a storehouse of ideas for home landscaping.

The sand and underlying clay characterize TBG as part of the Oak Openings Region. One part of this Metropark featuring native plants and wildlife is the restored Hill Stream corridor along Crosby Lake. In decades past, two dams had been built on Hill Stream to form Crosby Lake. Recent restoration removed the dams and added riffles, ledges, and rock structures to redirect the stream, reduce erosion and enhance fish habitat. Native plantings at the water's edges also increase habitat for birds, butterflies and other wildlife.

TBG history begins in 1964, when George Crosby donated 20 acres of his former horse farm and stable to the City of Toledo. Crosby had planted the area with over 350 individual trees and hundreds of shrubs of many varieties. Opening to the public in 1968, the early years brought an initiative for environmental education, and Toledo Public Schools began purchasing land next door for a vocational and agricultural education center. This was the beginning of what today is TBG's neighbor and partner, The Natural Science Technology Center.

As TBG became a hub for artistic design, sculptures were added to enhance the beauty. One of the earliest is "Old Woman and Birds," purchased in 1973 with the help of The Arts Commission of Greater Toledo who continue to maintain it through the Art in Public Places program. Since then, over a dozen more sculptures have been incorporated.



*Hill ditch stream site*



*Old Woman with Birds statue*



*Baltimore oriole*



*Virginia opossum (young)*

Also in the early 1970's, a small housing sub-division was purchased and became the origin of today's Artist's Village, where working art studios and galleries accommodate potters, glass blowers, photographers and painters. Today one of these houses is also the headquarters for The Ohio State University Cooperative Extension Service, Lucas County, who administers the popular Master Gardener and Ohio Certified Volunteer Naturalist programs.

The Peter Navarre Memorial Cabin, visible near the Conference Center Parking Lot, was moved to TBG in 1975. It is not clear whether this cabin was built by Peter, his son, or even after Navarre's death. Before arriving at TBG, it had been moved several times from its original location east of Toledo.

The Metroparks partnership with the Toledo Botanical Garden Board, Inc. began in 2006, and in 2017, TBG became a Metropark. The incredible work of volunteers, gardening groups and staff is reflected in inspired designs that offer beauty and peacefulness to those visiting this unique jewel now part of Metroparks Toledo.

In 2019, staff from TBG, Wildwood and Swan Creek designed, built and installed the Secret Forest, a new nature play area that features a tower, elevated tree platforms, bridges and so much more. Heavily utilized the Secret Forest sees over 200,000 visitors a year.

Named for board member Lera Doneghy's family, and completed in 2020, the Doneghy Inclusive Garden

features motion activated rain curtain, accessible raised beds, textured and ADA compliant paths, and a wide variety of sensory related plants—encouraging a full and interactive experience for all.

Please stay on trails and in lawn areas, leave your pets at home and your bicycles at the rack located in the front of the Elmer Drive entrance.

## Plant Life

### Trees / shrubs include:

Larch	Douglas fir
Norway spruce	Dawn redwood
Bald cypress	Yellowwood
Catalpa	Weeping willow
American hornbeam	Paw paw
Sumac	Redbud
American hazelnut	Witch hazel
Elderberry	Dogwood
American elm	Sassafras
Black walnut	Green ash

Sycamore and Linden allees invite visitors to stroll through the shade of their overarching branches.

### Plants include:

Spotted jewelweed	Tall Joe Pye weed
Dense blazing star	Butterfly milkweed
Common milkweed	Swamp milkweed
Bracken fern	Cinnamon fern
Sensitive fern	Royal fern
Boneset	Iris
Goldenrod species	Aster species
Peony	Popcorn cassia
Sedum	Coral bells (Heuchera)
False corn hellebore	Butterbur

Azalea, Rhododendron, Rose and Dahlia collections brighten their seasons with color.

TBG holds a nationally accredited Hosta Collection—a 'living repository' with more than 600 taxa on display, recognized by the Plant Collections Network of the American Public Garden Association since 2004. The Hosta Collection is also designated a National Display Garden of the American Hosta Society, since 2002.

The award-winning 'Daylily Walk,' is a collection of more than 450 cultivars, recognized as a Display Garden of the American Hemerocallis Society since 2001, as well as a Historic Daylily Display Garden of AHS since 2007.

In 2024, TBG was awarded Level II accreditation by the ArbNet Arboretum Accreditation Program. The program is specific to woody (tree and shrub) plant collections and focuses on the number of different plant species, the plant record procedures, policy and labeling, as well as public access.

## Wildlife

### Mammals include:

Eastern cottontail	Eastern fox squirrel
Red squirrel	Ground hog



*American elm*



*Tiger swallowtail*



*Daylily Walk*



*Dense blazing star*

White-tailed deer  
Red fox  
Virginia opossum

Muskrat  
Striped skunk  
Silver-haired bat

### Birds include:

Cooper's hawk  
Eastern screech owl  
Belted kingfisher  
Great blue heron  
Mallard duck  
American goldfinch  
Baltimore oriole  
American robin  
Carolina wren

Red-tailed hawk  
Great-horned owl  
Green heron  
Canada goose  
Song sparrow  
Orchard oriole  
Yellow warbler  
Gray catbird  
Blue jay

### Insects include:

Ebony jewel-wing  
Widow skimmer  
Common bumble bee  
Monarch  
Tiger swallowtail  
Silver-spotted skipper

Eastern amberwing  
Firefly  
Honeybee  
Black swallowtail  
Pearl crescent  
Peck's skipper

### Reptiles and amphibians include:

American toad  
Green frog  
Northern brown snake  
Eastern hognose snake  
Midland painted turtle

American bullfrog  
Eastern garter snake  
(and melanistic form)  
Snapping turtle

Stay on trails and use protective clothing and insecticide to avoid poison ivy, chiggers, ticks and mosquitoes.

(Note: There is no poison oak in Northwest Ohio.)

*Last updated: July 2025*