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Frederik Meijer Gardens shares plans for the holidays

By [Charlsie Dewey](#)

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Frederik Meijer Gardens' "Christmas and Holiday Traditions from Around the World" is back at for the holiday season. On display from Nov. 20-Jan. 6, the exhibit features 42 international trees and displays and an enchanting railway garden set amid a winter-scaped background.

A favorite pastime for Grand Rapids families and area visitors, the exhibit regularly draws 75,000 attendees.

The annual exhibit is in its 18th year, and this year the exhibit's main focus will be on the railway garden. Always a favorite among visitors, the train will once again weave its way through the indoor garden spaces, passing by storybook scenes and handcrafted Grand Rapids landmarks. This year, however, regular attendees will notice a fun addition: the Meyer May House, Voigt House, Paddock Place (now Mangiamo!), Jersey Junction and Fifth Third Ballpark now sit alongside the train's path. The new landmarks were added in response to a guest vote taken several years ago that asked which iconic buildings visitors would most like to see added.

Additionally, upon entering the Lena Meijer Tropical Conservatory, visitors will notice some enhancements that are the result of the recently begun outdoor Japanese Garden. "Kadomatsu," or "great pine," will welcome guests at the entrance to the conservatory. Kadomatsu is a traditional doorway decoration placed at the entrances of homes and businesses to bring prosperity and good luck in the New Year. Composed of bamboo, pine and plum blossoms, each item represents a significant element sacred to the Japanese culture.

"The kadomatsu is a breathtaking addition, which adds a unique quality to the Japanese display," said Lisa Roo, assistant curator of special exhibitions. "Its presence gives added cultural significance to the exhibition and makes for an unforgettable gateway into our conservatory."

For attendees willing to brave the cold, Meijer Gardens also offers carriage rides through a candle-lit sculpture park.

To accommodate visitors, Meijer Gardens will extend its hours until 9 p.m. on Dec. 18-22 and 26-29.

Exhibition activities include:

- Horse-drawn carriage rides: Dec. 4, 11, 18-22, from 5:30-9 p.m. Reservations are required and can be made by calling (616) 975-3151. The cost is \$60 per carriage for members and \$90 for nonmembers. Each carriage holds four adults.

- The Original Dickens Carolers: Tuesdays, Nov. 20 and 27 and Dec. 4 and 11, 18, from 6-8 p.m.
- Santa visits: Tuesdays, Nov. 20 and 27, Dec. 4, 11, 18, from 5-8 p.m.
- Art activities for families: Nov. 20, 27, Dec. 4, 11, 18, from 6-8 p.m.
- Rooftop reindeer: Saturdays, Nov. 24, Dec. 1, 8, 15 and 22, from 1-4 p.m.
- Sing-along trolley rides: Dec. 18-22, from 5:30-9 p.m. No reservations required. Adults \$8; children \$5.
- Christmas and holiday themed classes: Opportunities for adults and families. Fees apply.

Visit MeijerGardens.org/education for more information.



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