

Flowers, Photos & Food at Lewis and Clark's Garden Fest on Sept. 14

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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GODFREY - Lewis and Clark Community College (LCCC) invites the community to join them for an evening in the gardens at their annual Garden Festival.

This year's gardens follow the theme ["Discover the Monticello Sculpture Gardens."](#) with several gardens spread out across the 215-acre campus. The season will culminate in the festival from 5:30–8 p.m. on Thursday, Sept. 14 at the LCCC campus, where attendees can take walking tours, play lawn games and enjoy food and live music.

"We are really excited to celebrate this year with our garden festival," Katie Piper, LCCC's garden designer and horticulturist, said. "It's amazing to see so many people on

campus at once enjoying all the hard work that we've put into it. To really see people smile and enjoy it is my favorite part."

Piper added that the festival will be family-friendly, with plenty of games and places to lounge as local band [Soulshine Groove](#) plays. [Rudy's Flower Truck](#) will also drive in from St. Louis to sell custom arrangements. Visitors are encouraged to take the walking tour to see the plants and flowers, including eight pocket gardens.

Piper's favorite pocket garden is the Living Wall garden, which will have a few props for a makeshift photo booth. She calls it "the #NoFilter garden because it's the best spot for selfies." She also noted that many people only see a fraction of the campus because they stay near the buildings they frequent, so this event will encourage them to branch out.

"We like to try to do things that make students and people that are visiting the campus visit other areas, because there is so much to see," Piper said. "For this event specifically, we are spreading things out so not everything is concentrated. You have to walk a little bit to go to these different festivities that are happening, and by doing that you will get to see different parts of the campus."

Though summer is winding down, Piper's work is far from over. She will spend the winter months pruning and preparing for next year. The team typically chooses the garden theme in December and begins designing the gardens right away. By summer, when the walking tours are most popular, the gardens are in full bloom.

As a horticulturist, Piper is always looking for ways to expand the gardens and help the planet. She explained that the garden team is currently in the process of changing out annual gardens for more sustainable gardens.

"That's kind of the way that a lot of botanical gardens are going," she said. "We're trying to make sure we plant natives and things that are lower maintenance, require less fertilizer and water and are better for our environment, our pollinators and local wildlife."

The Lewis and Clark Foundation sponsors the gardens, and Piper voiced her appreciation for the school's support. She noted that many prospective students are persuaded by the campus, so it's important to keep the gardens bright and healthy.

"I feel very fortunate that the whole team at Lewis and Clark really does embrace the gardens, and they understand that they are important," Piper said. "The favorite part of

my job is getting to share the gardens with people. We love when people come out and take tours, or just when I see students taking pictures and stopping for a moment to appreciate them. That's probably the top part of my job."

You can see it for yourself from 5:30–8 p.m. on Sept. 14. For more information about the LCCC gardens and the upcoming Garden Festival, visit their [official website](#) or [Facebook page](#).