

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
REGENTS COMMUNICATION
ACTION REQUEST

Subject: Outdoor space naming

Action

Requested: Authorization to name U-M Peony Garden at Nichols Arboretum

Proposed

Name: W. E. Upjohn Peony Garden

Background:

In 1922, Dr. W. E. Upjohn gave a gift of peonies to the University of Michigan that would become what is now the University of Michigan Peony Garden at Nichols Arboretum. Dr. Upjohn's significant gift has come full circle, as his family has come together on the 100th anniversary of his gift, giving \$2 million to name the gardens after its original donor.

The Peony Garden has delighted the local community for nearly a century, and visiting it has become an annual spring pilgrimage for visitors from Michigan and beyond. Each year the garden presents a stunning display, with 350 historic herbaceous varieties from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries opening in near unison. At peak bloom, visitors are treated to more than 10,000 blossoms in shades of pink, red, and white.

Dr. W. E. Upjohn, a U-M Medical School alumnus (1875) and founder of the Upjohn Pharmaceutical Company in Kalamazoo, Michigan, donated a large, critically-evaluated collection of herbaceous peonies in 1922 that established the Peony Garden at Nichols Arboretum. It is believed that Upjohn contributed peonies from his own extensive collection, as well as exceptional selections from nationally recognized experts. The Peony Garden is now considered the largest collection of antique and heirloom herbaceous peonies in North America, with specimens that represent many of the important American, Canadian, and European herbaceous peonies of the era—over half of which are no longer commercially available.

In the last several years, interest in the garden has become a family affair. In 2016, W.E. Upjohn's last living grandchild Martha Gilmore Parfet made a gift of \$500,000 to help restore and protect the largest collection of heirloom peonies in North America. The gift was made in honor of Dr. Upjohn and established the W.E. Upjohn Peony Garden Endowment Fund to care for the historically and internationally significant Nichols Arboretum Peony Garden. It was Martha's desire to make additional gifts in her lifetime to name the Peony Garden in her father's honor. She died at the age of 91, before she could reach this goal.

In memory of their mother, Martha's children have since made additional contributions through the Martha & Ted Parfet Donor Advised Fund of the Kalamazoo Community Foundation to reach the naming goal their mother had set. Additional members of the W.E. Upjohn family have made personally significant gifts to the fund as well, totalling a \$2 million gift to the University of Michigan.

In recognition of the Upjohn family's exceptional generosity to U-M and this significant commitment, we recommend that the Board of Regents approve the naming of the W.E. Upjohn Peony Garden, effective immediately.

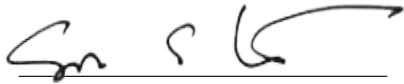
Respectfully submitted,



Tony Kolenic
Director
Nichols Arboretum



Thomas A. Baird
Vice President for Development



Geoffrey S. Chatas
Executive Vice President
and Chief Financial Officer

May 2022