



Designed as a quiet, contemplative retreat, this garden features naturalistic plantings of trees, grasses and wildflowers surrounded by tranquil views of the lake and shoreline.

SPIDER ISLAND

Designed to be a contemplative garden for quiet reflection, Spider Island features a naturalistic garden style, a wide variety of native and ornamental plants, handcrafted features made of natural materials and a secluded seating area with a magnificent view across the Garden's lakes.

Naturalistic Style

Sweeps of woodland, meadow and shoreline plants help to create the natural style of Spider Island. Trees such as birches, alders and serviceberries create cool shade and privacy along the path in the summer and add seasonal interest throughout the year with their flowers, leaves and bark. Shoreline plants start in the water and reach up onto the shore. Grasses sway in the wind, adding movement and sound to the garden experience. Native wildflowers contribute subtle seasonal color. Tall evergreens create a living screen for the seating area and shelter for birds.

The few built elements of the garden—the bridge, path and seating area—are made from natural materials and are carefully integrated into the landscape to reinforce the garden's naturalistic impression.

Strength and Beauty - Shoreline Enhancements

To add to the natural beauty of the garden and to prevent shoreline soil from eroding, more than 20 species of native shoreline plants were planted along the banks of Spider Island. Coconut fiber rolls placed along the shoreline protect the plants until they are established and will slowly degrade over the next few years.

The Designer

Spider Island's design was developed in 1999 by Michael Van Valkenburgh, a noted landscape architect and professor at the Harvard University School of Design.

Mr. Van Valkenburgh has created designs for the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden at the Walker Art Center, Paris' Tuileries Garden and Brooklyn Bridge Park. He is a graduate from Cornell University and the University of Illinois.

PLANT HIGHLIGHTS

Spider Island's naturalistic plantings include a wide variety of trees, grasses, native wildflowers and water-loving shoreline plants.

Trees

Apple serviceberry (*Amelanchier* x *grandiflora* 'Autumn Brilliance')

Look for white flowers in early spring; small, round, red-to-purple fruit in summer; brilliant red leaves in fall; and smooth, gray-streaked bark in winter.

Black alder (*Alnus glutinosa*)

One of the best shade trees for wet soils, this alder produces clusters of hanging flowers in early spring. Small, woody cones cover it in winter and are a favorite for birds.

Gray birch (*Betula populifolia*)

This birch is native to the Midwest and provides shade, attracts birds and features chalky-white, non-peeling bark that adds winter interest.

Hetz Wintergreen American arborvitae (*Thuja occidentalis* 'Hetz Wintergreen')

A dense evergreen, this Midwestern native creates a screen for the garden's seating area and attracts many birds.

Whitespire gray birch (*Betula populifolia* 'Whitespire')

This birch provides year-round interest, with shimmering dark green leaves in summer and beautiful white bark in winter.

Native Grasses and Wildflowers

Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*)

This perennial has orange-yellow flowers with dark centers and blooms in early to mid-summer. It is at home in a sunny meadow garden.

Pennsylvania sedge (*Carex pennsylvanica*)

A grasslike plant that can take shady, dry conditions, this sedge grows to form a mat on the woodland floor.

Common shooting star (*Dodecatheon meadia*)

This early spring perennial has a showy display of dainty flowers and a unique flower shape that gives the plant its common name. Good for edges of woodland gardens.

Prairie dropseed (*Sporobolus heterolepis*)

This distinctive grass has dense tufts of long, narrow leaves up to 20 inches long and flower stalks that may reach 2½ feet tall.

Purple coneflower (*Echinacea purpurea*)

Native to the Illinois prairie, this late summer-blooming perennial has rosy-purple daisylike flowers and a central cone composed of prickly spines. It is drought-tolerant and grows 2 to 3 feet in height.

Shoreline Plants

Blue flag iris (*Iris virginica* var. *shrevei*)

In spring, showy, violet-blue flowers with yellow centers stand on a sturdy stalk among bright green swordlike leaves.

Common bur reed (*Sparganium eurycarpum*)

This tall, grasslike aquatic plant displays ball-shaped heads of tiny green flowers in summer and burlike green fruit on zigzag stalks. It grows partly in and partly out of the water, and the seeds attract waterfowl and marsh birds.

Common water plantain (*Alisma subcordatum*)

Tiny white flowers bloom in summer on this tall, slender native plant. Its lower part grows under the water while its upper part is exposed.

Lizard's tail (*Saururus cernuus*)

In summer, look for this plant's heart-shaped leaves and drooping, tapered stalks made up of many tiny, fragrant, white flowers.

Pickereel weed (*Pontederia cordata*)

Long, funnel-shaped, violet-blue flowers and long, heart-shaped leaves extend above the water while the stem is partially submerged.

*Spider Island is a gift from
Esther Grunsfeld Klatz and Ernest A.
Grunsfeld III in memory of Sally Grunsfeld.*

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of Natural Resources.*

TO LEARN MORE

Lovejoy, Ann. *Naturalistic Gardening: Reflecting the Planting Patterns of Nature*. Seattle: Sasquatch Books, 1998.

Malitz, Jerome and Seth Malitz. *Reflecting Nature: Garden Designs from Wild Landscapes*. Portland, Ore.: Timber Press, 1998.

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CHICAGO BOTANIC GARDEN

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The Chicago Botanic Garden is owned by the Forest Preserve District of Cook County.

DESIGN HIGHLIGHTS

Spider Island is a small island garden; yet it was designed to create the experience of being in a much larger, more secluded woodland space.

- 1** A 110-foot handcrafted boardwalk made of rough-hewn black locust wood introduces the naturalistic style of the garden.
The boardwalk meets the island at an angle. This angle allows for a longer walk, helping to create a sense of destination, anticipation and arrival.
The boardwalk rests low, near to the water level, to provide a closer view of the lake and shoreline plants and to make the island appear higher.
- 2** Naturalistic plantings along the shoreline blur the edges of the island to make it appear larger.
- 3** The path curves through and around the outside of the island to create the experience of a long, leisurely stroll in an otherwise small space.
A small valley was created for the path to screen outside views and suggest a sense of enclosure.
Sections of the path are sheltered by alder and birch trees to evoke the feeling of a secluded woodland walk.
Centrally placed landforms obscure a larger view on the whole island in favor of a series of views along the path.
- 4** A tranquil seating area at the end of the path offers a dramatic view of the lake and gardens beyond.
- 5** Huge granite boulders from Wisconsin form the seating area and contribute to the natural feel of this secluded space.

