HATCH-WESTERMAN FAMILY AND CHILDREN’S PLAY AREA FEASIBILITY STUDY

Monticello, Illinois
The main goal of the “Forgotten Garden” is to attract more children and families to Allerton, providing opportunities to experience nature in a quietly playful setting. The overall design concept fits into the prevailing sense of place that defines Allerton’s formal gardens and woodlands, with native plantings that reflect the woods, and architectural and sculptural detailing that reflect the gardens. While children will be invited to explore and play, the focus will be on passive activities that discourage overactive and noisy play.

The Forgotten Garden’s location is in a large area of woods bordered by the existing parking lot, the Vine Walk, and the Fu Dogs Garden. The existing woodlands provide a wide buffer between the new Forgotten Garden and the existing historic gardens. The site is in close proximity to the existing parking lot, and also is near the entry and exit to the existing Orange Trail through the woods.

Access to and through the entire Forgotten Garden will meet all University of Illinois ADA accessibility standards. In some of the garden’s specific destinations, however, some deviation from strict ADA guidelines will allow children with disabilities to play in more inclusive ways.
The Forgotten Garden
Hatch-Westerman Family and Children’s Play Area Feasibility Study
Allerton Park & Retreat Center - Monticello, Illinois

Entry court and walk: This is a place to gather and pause before walking into the woods and on to the Forgotten Garden. There is a drinking fountain and an entry sign, and a restroom is nearby. An allée of flowering trees leads through the woods and to the garden.

Woodland edge and understory to remain

Orchard Walk

Stumpery

Be the Sculpture

The Aerie

Lucky Cat Allée

Fairy Houses

Mirror Walk

Fountain Creek

Gravel Terrace

Woodland Walk

Brush Scramble

Teahouse Treehouse

The Walled Garden

Spirit of Nature
The Walled Garden

The central feature in the garden's backstory, it's where the "ruined" formal garden now has been filled with native wildflowers and grasses. It will be a haven for butterflies and birds. The old masonry walls appear to have fallen down, with the piles of stone now serving as climbing rocks where kids can play. A child-size "tunnel" of tall native grasses runs through the center, while grownups can rest on benches around the edges and watch the children play.
Gravel Terrace
This is a simple open court paved with compacted gravel, surrounded by herbaceous borders and benches. It is an unstructured open space where different activities can be staged, with enough room to accommodate two temporary tents.
Be the Sculpture
At first glance this statue appears to be a classical Greek torso, such as you might expect to find at other locations throughout Allerton. However, on close inspection you discover that it is only the façade of a statue. You can stand behind it and place your head and arms to complete the statue – a perfect photo opportunity.

Lucky Cat Allee‘
A humorous child-size reinterpretation of the Fu Dog Garden, this feature includes eleven pairs of Chinese “lucky cat” sculptures. The pathway is narrow, and the plinths are low enough for kids to touch and enjoy the sculptures.
The Aerie
A ramp leads up to a giant bird’s nest – 4 feet above the ground – with a view down to the gardens below.

Fairy Houses
Here is a place where materials are provided so that kids can build their own small “fairy house.” At the center is a child-size pavilion, for shade and protection from rain.
Mirror Walk
Dense walls of native shrubs surround a grouping of stainless steel mirrors, where kids can find themselves reflected in nature.

Fountain Creek
This simple recirculating water feature includes a formal gardens fountain that cascades into a small natural ‘creek’ where kids can splash and play.
**Woodland Walk**
This is a small meandering walkway, off the major path, with small seats where kids can sit and feel removed from the rest of the garden.

**Brush Scramble**
What appears to be nothing more than a big pile of brush, actually has a tunnel going through it where kids can pretend they are animals in their natural habitat.
Teahouse Treehouse
A gently sloping ramp leads up to a covered pavilion among the treetops, with a view down the slope and into the woods. Its latticework detailing makes reference to the latticed pavilion that is adjacent to the Peony Garden.
Spirit of Nature
When you enter a dense thicket of shrubs, you will find the spirit of nature – a sculptural face – coming up from the forest floor.
The Stumpery
Reminiscent of a feature you might find in an 18th century English estate garden, the Stumpery is an artistic arrangement of fallen tree trunks and branches. It provides a place for kids to practice motor skills such as balancing and climbing, or to roll over logs and search for insects and worms.
The Orchard Walk
Following the “abandoned garden” theme, this appears to be an old orchard that has become filled with a native meadow. A curving pathway leads through the orchard to a few benches in a quiet resting place.