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Popular Quilt Gardens opening 10th anniversary season with two new sites, major sculpture exhibition

The 10th anniversary of the popular [Quilt Gardens](#) will feature two new sites, a new Quilt Mural and one of the largest-ever exhibitions of [Seward Johnson bronze sculptures](#) outside of the artist's personal retrospective.

Planting of the 19 Quilt Gardens in late May has become an annual rite of spring, bringing out expert gardeners and volunteers alike to plant the thousands of plants that will flower into 1 million or more blooms at their peak.

The Quilt Gardens, which are free to the public, open officially May 30, 2017, and close Oct. 1, 2017.

This year, this one-of-a-kind exhibit will be accompanied by something else unprecedented — 56 life-size bronze sculptures by noted American artist Seward Johnson throughout the downtowns of Elkhart, Goshen, Nappanee, Middlebury, Bristol and Wakarusa. The sculpture exhibit will be topped off by a monumental, 25-foot-tall sculpture that will tower over downtown Elkhart's Central Park.

The new Quilt Gardens sites will be at Wellfield Botanic Gardens in Elkhart and at The Barn Door in Middlebury. Wellfield Botanic Gardens is returning as a Quilt Gardens site after a hiatus of five years, while The Barn Door is a recently opened shop featuring antique, vintage and re-purposed furniture and household items.

In addition to the 19 Quilt Gardens, there will be 22 Quilt Murals returning on display, including a new mural at the Elkhart Public Library.

“When you put it all together, you have an Epic Art Adventure,” said Diana Lawson, chief executive officer of the Elkhart County Convention & Visitors Bureau, making reference to the theme of this summer's public art displays. “Come to any of the Quilt Gardens sites from May 30 to Oct. 1 and you'll likely run into an avid quilter, gardener, photographer or family enjoying beauty in its various forms.”

Each year, the Quilt Gardens bloom in exciting new combinations with patterns selected by each site to complement their surroundings. It takes an estimated 2,000 man-hours to plant, weed, water and maintain the gardens each year.

“The annual Quilt Gardens along the Heritage Trail has been an integral part of extending the stay of our current guests while warmly welcoming new visitors to experience Das Dutchman Essenhaus for the first time. It's truly an honor to partner with the Elkhart County Convention & Visitors Bureau as they celebrate 10 years of success with this countywide event,” said Hannah Walsh, director of marketing for Das Dutchman Essenhaus.

The Quilt Murals are at 16 sites, with a location in Nappanee and Middlebury each having four. The newest Quilt Mural is the Educate, Enlighten & Entertain mural at the Elkhart Public Library's main branch downtown.

“Displaying a Quilt Mural and hosting a Seward Johnson sculpture are two of the many ways we fulfill Elkhart Public Library’s mission to education, enlighten and entertain our community. We’re grateful the Friends of Elkhart Public Library support our active participation in local arts and culture initiatives, and we invite the public to come the library and learn more about the artist, the style, and the themes and ideas depicted in these works,” said Lisa Guedea Carreno, director of the Elkhart Public Library.

The Elkhart County Convention & Visitors Bureau is the official tourism advertising/marketing and public/community relations organization for the Elkhart County hospitality industry. The ECCVB champions local businesses, programs and projects that serve residents, visitors and hospitality interests.

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