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For immediate release

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**NOTE:**

Media interviews for a behind-the-scenes look are available with the Boerner Botanical Gardens Director and a China Lights representative/translator. Please call ahead.

## **Chinese Lantern Festival Opening at Boerner Botanical Gardens, Oct. 1**

Milwaukee, WI (Sept. 26, 2016) — As the sun goes down Oct. 1, Boerner Botanical Gardens will be transformed into a dramatic display of color, light, and sound at the first festival of its kind in the Midwest.

China Lights: Boerner Brighter Than Ever is a celebration of Asian culture featuring 40 larger-than-life sculptural lantern displays, stage performances highlighting folk-culture entertainment and activities, and a bustling marketplace. China Lights will be open through Oct. 30, Tuesday–Sunday from 5:30–10 p.m. An opening-night welcome will be given at 6 p.m. by Milwaukee County Executive Chris Abele and Parks Director John Dargle, Jr. Boerner Botanical Gardens is located in Whitnall Park at 9400 Boerner Drive, Hales Corners, WI.

### **Lantern Displays**

After passing through the Welcome Gate, visitors may find that each display is more magical than the last.

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Over the past month, 28 artisans from China have been on-site creating welded metal frames, lighting the frames from within using various types and colors of LED lights, covering the framework in brilliantly colored fabric, and hand-painting finishing touches. Among the components emerging from the process are glowing flowers, peacocks, cranes, and pandas.

Using a special technique, artisans in China created a sparkling surface on a pair of quilin, a mythical animal with the head of a dragon, horns, the hooves of a deer, and the tail of an ox. Covering the bodies are thousands of tiny bottles filled with colored water.

Display sizes are as large as the 200-foot-long dragon and the three-story palace pagoda.

### **Illumination Parade**

Each night at about 6:15 p.m. members of the entertainment staff will lead a procession to light the zodiac display in the Shrub Mall of the Botanical Gardens. The Illumination Parade will conclude at the main stage in time for the first performance of the night.

### **Stage Performances**

Opening night offers three stage performances highlighting folk-culture. At 6:30, 8, and 9 p.m., Tibetan dance and Bian Lian, or face changing, will amaze the audience. Face changing, or mask changing, is the ancient Chinese art form from the Sichuan opera. Performers wear thin masks that change with the passing of a fan. At the 9 p.m. performance, visitors will see an additional feature, a Chinese fashion show. The show will feature the Qipao, the classic, form-fitting silk dress.

Entertainment will be varied throughout the run of the show. Tuesday through Thursday, performances will be at 6:30 and 8 p.m. A third performance will be added every Friday through Sunday at 9 p.m.

### **Cultural Displays**

For China Lights, the Garden House will be the center for cultural displays. Three lantern replicas of the terra cotta warriors will be on view along with poster displays about the making of China Lights, and continuous streaming video on China's history, culture, and tourism.

### **Food & Beverage**

Throughout the festival a variety of Asian and American food options will be available for purchase. Lighter fare includes Asian Cucumber Salad, Vegetable Egg Roll with Sweet and Sour Sauce, and Peking Duck Spring Roll with Plum Dipping Sauce. From the grill are hot dogs, bratwurst, and cheeseburgers. Entree options are Mongolian Beef, and Sweet and Sour Chicken. For dessert, a new twist on the egg roll is offered—Homemade Apple Pie Egg Roll, dusted with cinnamon sugar and served with homemade caramel sauce.

Variety is also key in the beverage selection. Ten adult beverages are being served. Highlighting the selection of five draft beers is China Lights Red, a red lager from MillerCoors brewed especially for this event. For a beer from China, visitors can enjoy a bottle of Tsingtao, a lager from the nation's largest brewery. Wine is also available, including Ozeki Sake, a fresh Japanese sake made from rice.

Non-alcoholic beverages include bottled citrus green tea, sodas, and bottled water.

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**Admission/Fees**

China Lights admission tickets will be valid any night of the regular 2016 schedule. Admission is \$15 for adults (age 18–59) and \$10 for seniors (age 60 and up) and children (age 5-17). Children under age 5 will be admitted free. For \$30, a patron may purchase a one-visit VIP ticket, which includes a behind-the-scenes tour, optional participation in the Illumination Parade, fabric lantern, and mobile guide. Grass-lot parking is included with all admission tickets.

Preferred, close-up paved parking will be limited and available on a first-come, first-served basis for \$5 cash per night. Some spaces in this area will be designated for and are free to people with disabilities who have state-issued disabled parking or disabled Veteran parking license plates, or the state-issued disabled parking identification card.

Offered exclusively at the Botanical Gardens, in advance at the information desk or later at the box office, will be a season pass with unlimited visits for \$45, and a mobile guide, which requires a cell phone for use, for \$5.

Tickets may be purchased in advance on-line at [chinalights.org](http://chinalights.org), Boerner Botanical Gardens, and Milwaukee County Parks point-of-sale locations, including Parks Public Services (9480 Watertown Plank Road), regulation golf courses, The Domes, and the Milwaukee County Sports Complex.

While the displays are magical at night, they are beautiful during the day. Displays may be viewed unlit during the day for the cost of regular Botanical Gardens admission. Patrons may purchase an evening ticket for that same day by presenting the daily admission wristband and paying an additional \$10.

Co-presenters of the event are the Park People of Milwaukee County and Travel Wisconsin. Event sponsors are the We Energies Foundation, Miller Lite, and Tri City National Bank.

For more information, visit [chinalights.org](http://chinalights.org).

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