UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN HEALTH-WEST

CHRISTMAS & HOLIDAY TRADITIONS

NOVEMBER 22, 2022–JANUARY 8, 2023
CHRISTMAS TREES & HOLIDAY TRADITIONS DISPLAYS
01  Frederik Meijer Gardens Amphitheater | *Seasonal Light Experience*
6 pm–8 pm, December 19–23 & 26–30
Be sure to bundle up and venture out onto the cleared pathways to see the 20-minute show.

02  Peter & Emajean Cook Transportation Center | *Mom, Dad, and the Kid*

03  Michigan’s Farm Garden | Farmhouse Tree | Sleigh | Reindeer
Saturdays, November 26 & December 3, 10, 17, & 24, | 1–4 pm
See the season in a new light at the *University of Michigan Health–West: Christmas & Holiday Traditions* exhibition! We’re illuminating the ways in which diverse cultures use light to uplift hope, warmth, faith, remembrance, gratitude, prosperity and more during the darkest days of the year. From the warm glow of the Hanukkah menorah, to the bright flash of Diwali fireworks, to the starry sparkle of Filipino Christmas lanterns, light is at the center of the celebration in holiday festivities around the world. This year’s exhibition features additional indoor lighting and a new, immersive light experience at the Frederik Meijer Gardens Amphitheater—beginning at 6 pm on December 19–23 and 26–30). Come celebrate the season with us!

This exhibition honors cultures and holiday traditions from around the world. The annual exhibition celebrating Christmas and holiday traditions and the winter season is a Frederik Meijer Gardens & Sculpture Park hallmark, developed in collaboration with community partners. Traditions vary from region to region and family to family. The details of each display do not suggest all people in any one culture celebrate the holidays in exactly the same way. Meijer Gardens honors the joy all families experience when gathering together in celebration. Lena Meijer, and some family and friends, began *Christmas & Holiday Traditions* in 1995 with 20 displays. For 2022, the exhibition has grown to 42 displays depicting fact and folklore, past and present. Dedicate time to appreciate the stunning presentations of winter plantings, the artistry of our adorned Christmas trees, intriguing cultural displays and the beloved Railway Garden. Venture outdoors and discover the beauty of nature with wintertime walks. Indoors and out, our magnificent grounds will sparkle with more than 350,000 lights.
HANUKKAH

This Jewish holiday celebrates the Maccabees’ victory over the Syrian government more than 2,000 years ago, resulting in the return of the Temple of Jerusalem to Jewish hands. A single cruet of oil miraculously continued to burn for eight full days at the rededication of the temple.

Hanukkah is known as the eight-day Festival of Lights. Candles in a special menorah are lit on each night of the festival. A menorah has nine candle holders: Eight candles represent the eight days of celebration and the additional candle, called the shamash, is used to light the others. The lighting of the candles is a reminder of the holiday’s miracle.

After lighting the menorah, it is customary in many homes to play a game of dreidel, in which participants spin a four-sided top like the wooden one on display here. Hebrew letters appear on each side of the dreidel and stand for the Hebrew words Nes Gado Haya Sham: “A great miracle happened there.”

The Star of David is a six-pointed star consisting of two interlocking equilateral triangles. Named after King David, it is widely recognized as a symbol of Judaism and modern-day Israel.

To see other holiday traditions practiced, observed, or celebrated in the Middle East, visit the Eid al-Fitr display and Middle East tree.

Please watch joy, a film highlighting celebrated holiday traditions from centuries ago that are still vital in our local community today—including Hanukkah traditions. The film is showing continuously in the Hoffman Family Auditorium.
Diwali, also known as the Festival of Lights, is a significant five-day celebration observed among Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, and some Buddhists between mid-October and mid-November. For many, it is a time for festive fireworks, lights, flowers, decorations and special worship, known as puja.

The Diwali festival is widely celebrated with rangoli, which are colorful designs and patterns usually made with colored sand, rice flour, flowers, or beans and lentils. Women create rangoli near the entrance to a house to welcome guests or on the floors of their homes to adorn the puja space. Most rangoli designs are motifs of plants, flowers, animals or geometric patterns. The materials used are meant as offerings to the gods. As they disintegrate, they become one with the Earth again and one with the gods. Plants and flowers are an integral part of Diwali. Banana plants, hibiscus and strings of carnations may be used to decorate during this festive time.

The true meaning behind Diwali is to rejoice in the inner light. The inner light is symbolized by lighting a small brass lamp called a diya. Lighting a diya is considered highly favorable, bringing prosperity and good health.
One of the most important holiday celebrations of the year in Lithuania is the traditional Christmas Eve dinner called Kucios. Twelve dishes are often served on the table, representing the 12 disciples of Jesus.

If a family member died during the past year, an empty place is set and a candle is lit in remembrance. It is believed the spirit of the deceased family member participates in the Kucios. Following Kucios, family members place one piece of straw into a cradle for every good deed or kind word said during the holiday. This cradle is placed under the Christmas tree for the Christ child.

On this tree are sodai, intricate geometric mobiles handmade from straw. This European holiday craft was adopted by Lithuanians. Sodai means “gardens” but can also translate to “chandeliers.” The folk tradition of hanging a straw mobile over the dining room table was believed to ensure good crops in the following year.

The straw decorations displayed here were created by Ursula Astras, who emigrated to the United States from Lithuania after World War II. Although her works and motifs are in the Lithuanian tradition, her style is distinctly innovative and unique as she has pushed folk art into fine art.
The star is an important symbol in several holiday traditions and can take many shapes. Among the most interesting is the Moravian Star, with its unique multisided, three-dimensional appearance. The star originated in the Moravian Church's schools as a geometry lesson. The challenging project produced beautiful star shapes, which were used as lanterns during Christmas.

The star was soon adopted throughout the Moravian Church as an Advent symbol. These stars are often seen in Moravian Nativity and putz displays as a representation of the Star of Bethlehem.

The Moravian name refers to the religion’s origins in Bohemia and Moravia, now the Czech Republic. The shape of the Moravian Star has come to represent the holiday season for many people who celebrate Christmas.

A former Moravian school student began manufacturing these star lanterns out of tin and glass. Later, he produced do-it-yourself kits featuring stars assembled from paper with punched holes. The stars became popular in other parts of the world, especially in the areas of Pennsylvania and upstate New York where members of the North American Moravian Church had settled.
In the Philippines, the *parol*, a star-shaped lantern, is the main symbol of Christmas. The *parol* represents the star of Bethlehem and is unique to the Philippines. Traditionally made from bamboo and paper, many *parols* today are made from *capiz*, naturally translucent seashells found in the waters of the Philippine Islands.

The most important Filipino Christmas tradition is *simbang gabi*, the Catholic custom of night mass, which means going to mass at dawn on nine consecutive days.

Notably, the Philippines has the longest Christmas holiday in the Christian world, sometimes beginning as early as September and lasting until the first Sunday in January.
Traditional Swedish ornaments are woven of straw and made in all shapes and sizes. The *julbock*, or Yule goat, is a goat made of straw that has become part of Christmas celebrations in Sweden over time. Some folklore says the bringer of Christmas gifts arrives on this animal.

The Swedish folk art *dala* horse is recognized as an unofficial symbol of Sweden. The *dala* horse has its origins in the rural Dalarna region, where woodcarving was a common practice during winter evenings. Woodcarvers made toys for their children using basic tools—typically only a knife. The handicraft of carving and then painting small horses became custom in the 19th century and gained widespread popularity. Soon, these beautiful handicrafts were sold far and wide throughout Sweden.

The Christmas season begins on December 13 with a traditional Scandinavian festival celebrating the life of St. Lucia, whose name is associated with light across many different traditions. St. Lucia wears a wreath of candles on her head representing hope, warmth and light during the darkest month of the year.

Please watch *joy*, a film highlighting celebrated holiday traditions from centuries ago that are still vital in our local community today. The film is showing continuously in the Hoffman Family Auditorium.
EXHIBITION ACTIVITIES

SANTA VISITS
Lena Meijer Tropical Conservatory
Tuesdays | November 22–December 20 | 5–8 pm

THE ORIGINAL DICKENS CAROLERS
BISSELL & Gunberg Corridors
Tuesdays | November 22–December 20 | 6–8 pm

ROOFTOP REINDEER
Michigan’s Farm Garden
Saturdays, November 26 & December 3, 10, 17, & 24, | 1–4 pm

CELEBRATING KUCIOS WITH DON ASTRAS
Sunday, December 4 | 2–3 pm

CELEBRATING HANUKKAH WITH THE JEWISH FEDERATION OF GRAND RAPIDS
Sunday, December 11 | 2–3 pm

CELEBRATING DIWALI WITH THE WEST MICHIGAN BENGALI CULTURAL ASSOCIATION
Sunday, January 8 | 2–3 pm

For a full list of events, please visit: MeijerGardens.org/christmas
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<td>Cate Jansma &amp; Sid Jansma, Jr.</td>
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<td>Japan</td>
<td>Daniel &amp; Pamella DeVos Foundation</td>
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<td>Korea</td>
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<td>Lithuania</td>
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<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>J.C. &amp; Tammy Huizenga</td>
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<td>Poinsettias</td>
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