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## City's sewer project has closed several Lauritzen Gardens areas

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KENT SIEVERS/THE WORLD-HERALD

The new Japanese Garden at the Lauritzen Gardens is closed until spring 2014 because of Omaha's ongoing sewer project. Twelve of the botanical center's 19 garden areas, plus Kenefick Park, are still open to the public.

Omaha's big sewer project is temporarily changing the shape of Lauritzen Gardens — and in some ways sparking new long-term additions to the popular destination.

City crews began digging through the South Omaha botanical center on Oct. 1. It's just one of dozens of sites in eastern Omaha that will see work over the next few years as Omaha completes more than \$2 billion in federally mandated sewer work.

The work at Lauritzen, situated on Bancroft Street just north of Interstate 80, represents a relatively small piece of the overall project. But Marty Grate, the city's environmental services manager, said it required some special considerations because the gardens were built on a site where the city once deposited its trash.

"It's a more complicated project than some of the others because of the prior use of that land as a balefill," he said.

Plus, the city is working with Lauritzen to try to avoid closing certain parts of the gardens during times of the year when they see the most traffic.

Mia Jenkins, Lauritzen's director of marketing, said the work will happen in phases, with the first to be completed by the spring. Currently closed areas involved in that phase are the arboretum and bird sanctuary, the Garden in the Glen and the Model Railroad Garden.

Areas closed until spring 2014, which will mark the end of the work, are the Children's Garden, Founders' Garden, Herb Garden and a new Japanese Garden.

For now, 12 of the 19 garden areas, along with Kenefick Park, are open to the public.

Jenkins said the work hasn't disrupted the floral display hall, where the fall chrysanthemum show is under way.

While some areas are closed, she said, there are efforts to bring in other new and unusual exhibits, including one coming in February and March that will feature sculptures made from Lego bricks.

"We're trying to ramp up the offerings we provide to the community, bringing in exciting things so people do still think of the garden during this time," Jenkins said.

The work also is offering Lauritzen a chance to expand into areas that were previously undeveloped.

Jenkins said some drainage problems related to the site's history as a balefill will be resolved. Some trees will be removed, but others will be planted.

"The momentum of the garden will continue," Jenkins said. "The disruption is temporary, and there are long-term gains for us."

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