Iowa Arboretum & Gardens – Website Policy Reference
Drone and Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) Policy

Purpose

The Iowa Arboretum & Gardens is committed to providing a safe, welcoming, and enjoyable experience for all visitors while protecting the Arboretum's gardens, natural areas, wildlife, privacy, and property. Because unmanned aircraft systems (UAS), commonly known as drones, can create safety, privacy, noise, and wildlife concerns, the following policy applies to all drone operations associated with the Arboretum.

Visitor Drone Use

The operation, launching, landing, or recovery of drones by visitors is prohibited on Iowa Arboretum & Gardens property unless specifically authorized in advance by the Executive Director or their designee. This prohibition applies to recreational, hobby, personal photography, and other unauthorized drone operations. Visitors may not launch or land drones from Arboretum property, even if the drone is intended to operate elsewhere.

Authorized Drone Operations

The Executive Director or their designee may authorize drone operations when they determine that the activity supports the mission or operations of the Arboretum.
Examples may include:

- Professional photography or videography for Arboretum marketing and communications
- Documentation of gardens, landscapes, trails, buildings, or construction projects
- Site planning, mapping, surveying, or maintenance
- Educational or research activities
- Special events or other activities specifically approved by the Arboretum

All authorized operators must comply with applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations, including FAA requirements.

Safety Requirements

All authorized drone operators are responsible for complying with applicable FAA requirements and operating their aircraft in a safe manner.
Drone operations must:

- Not create a risk of injury to guests, staff, volunteers, or other persons on Arboretum property.
- Avoid flying over visitors, staff, volunteers, or event participants unless specifically permitted under applicable FAA rules.
- Avoid interference with aircraft, emergency operations, or other airspace users.
- Maintain required visual line of sight and comply with applicable altitude and operating restrictions.
- Follow applicable FAA registration, Remote ID, pilot certification, and airspace authorization requirements.
- Be conducted in a manner that does not create an unreasonable risk to people, property, plants, wildlife, or facilities.
- Immediately discontinue operations if directed by Arboretum staff because of safety concerns, weather, emergency conditions, wildlife activity, or other circumstances.

Injury or Damage Resulting from Drone Operations
The drone operator is responsible for operating the drone in a safe manner and for complying with all applicable laws and regulations. The operator may be held responsible for injuries to guests, staff, volunteers, or other persons and for damage to Iowa Arboretum & Gardens property resulting from the operation of the drone, to the extent permitted by applicable law. Damage to Arboretum property includes, but is not limited to:

- Buildings and structures
- Trees, plants, gardens, and other landscaping
- Signs, displays, and interpretive materials
- Vehicles and other equipment
- Fences, trails, and other infrastructure
- Event equipment or temporary structures

The Arboretum may require proof of liability insurance from commercial, professional, or other authorized operators before granting permission to operate a drone on Arboretum property.

Visitors and Privacy
Drone operations may not be used to harass, intimidate, photograph, or record visitors, staff, or private activities in a manner that violates applicable privacy laws or the Arboretum's policies. The Arboretum will prohibit or restrict authorized drone operations in areas where privacy, visitor experience, wildlife, or other concerns warrant additional protection.

Wildlife and Natural Areas
Because the Arboretum includes gardens, prairie, woodland, and other natural habitats, drone operations must not intentionally disturb wildlife or interfere with nesting, roosting, breeding, or other sensitive wildlife activity. The Arboretum may establish temporary no-drone areas or prohibit drone operations in specific natural areas when necessary to protect wildlife or habitat.

Events
Drone operations are prohibited during public events, weddings, concerts, festivals, school programs, or other large gatherings unless specifically approved in advance by the Executive Director. Approval does not override any FAA restriction concerning operations over people or open-air assemblies.

Commercial and Professional Operators
Professional or commercial drone operators must obtain prior written authorization from the Arboretum before operating on Arboretum property.
The Arboretum may require the operator to provide:

- Proof of FAA certification or other applicable authorization
- Proof of drone registration, when required
- Proof of liability insurance
- A description of the proposed flight
- Dates and times of operation
- Identification of the pilot and crew
- Evidence of required airspace authorization
- Any other information reasonably necessary to evaluate the proposed operation

Enforcement

Arboretum staff may require an unauthorized drone operator to cease launching or landing the drone on Arboretum property and may take other appropriate action consistent with applicable law and Arboretum policies. The Arboretum does not assume responsibility for the operation of drones or for determining whether a particular flight complies with FAA requirements. Each operator is responsible for knowing and complying with all applicable laws and regulations.

Exceptions

The Executive Director may make exceptions to this policy when an exception is consistent with the Arboretum's mission, visitor safety, privacy, wildlife protection, and applicable laws and regulations.

Policy Administration

The Executive Director or their designee is responsible for administering this policy and may establish additional procedures or restrictions as necessary.