Progress in the Garden

One of the most exciting aspects of creating a new garden is searching for high-quality trees and plants. Our design team has spent countless hours with staff, board members, and knowledgeable volunteers.

GUESTS OF ALL AGES AND FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE will discover plants from around the world in Houston Botanic Garden’s Global Collection Garden. The garden will feature breathtaking displays that will fascinate, educate, and inspire an appreciation for the natural world. Like Houston, the Global Collection Garden will be a unique showcase of diversity.

This three-acre garden, located on the Island created by the meander and channel of Sims Bayou, will celebrate the immense biodiversity of our world by giving visitors the chance to observe unique plants from across the globe. Winding paths throughout the Global Collection Garden will allow guests to view rare plants up close and learn about these plants while immersing themselves in the beauty of nature. The plantings will be arranged by climates – arid, subtropical, and tropical – encouraging a deeper understanding of how different ecosystems function and which plants contribute to each of them. Guests will be able to explore the world right here in Houston!

The Corner of Curiosity will lure visitors toward remarkable and unique species with interesting plant forms, drawing guests into the amazing world of botany. Weird and wonderful plants in this garden will inspire curiosity about plants we rarely see, stirring conversation, and sure-to-be-shared photos of fascinating forms.

Botanists’ Alley will showcase the work of three famous Texas botanists: Ferdinand Lindheimer, the father of Texas Botany; John Fairey, collector and founder of Peckerwood Gardens; and Lynn Lowery, a beloved plant explorer. This garden will feature many of the numerous specimens these collectors identified, collected, and studied to honor their contributions to the knowledge of Texas plants and inspire conservation of our region’s precious biodiversity.

The Upland Forest will offer a shaded path through a forest tree canopy as the backdrop to Pollinator Plaza, which will feature an incredible number of pollinator-friendly plants sharing with guests how critical these species are to the health of our environment.

A Seasonal Display Field will be tucked into the Global Collection Garden and feature rotating displays to inspire home gardeners to explore new and different plants and horticulture techniques.

In the Global Collection Garden, guests will encounter two outdoor structures known as Children’s Curiosity Cabinets. These hands-on outdoor rooms will allow our young visitors to see, touch, and feel interesting and unique natural objects.
From the
Board Chair

DEAR FRIENDS,

Each spring, I look forward to watching the flowers awaken from their winter slumber. Sunflowers (Helianthus annuus), in particular, just make me happy. I love the way they move their blooms and follow the sun, exhibiting their amazing heliotropism each day. The blooms that have captured my attention the most, however, are passion flowers (Passiflora spp.). These exotic flowers have always fascinated me. I remember being enraptured by their bold colors and exploding tendrils as a young child.

I would go across the street and pick these delicate specimens the day they opened. I also remember the loving lessons my mother instilled about respect for nature and neighbors, encouraging me not to snatch them away so others could also enjoy them. I had so much fun with those passion flowers, playing with their wiry stems, weaving necklaces for my troll dolls, letting my imagination run wild.

I have planted passion flowers in every garden I’ve had since. Gardening isn’t just about soil and seeds—it is also about soul. Our connections to plants remind us of loved ones and cherished places. Gardening shows us that the simple joy of growth is truly fulfilling and beautiful. This spring, I hope you share some wonderful garden moments with people who matter most to you, creating memories and inspiration that will last a lifetime.

The Houston Botanic Garden will be a place where lovely memories are awakened and new ones are created—all through the beauty and freshness of the gardens. Please join me as we Grow Houston’s Garden!

Nancy O’Connor Abendshein
Board Chair

The MISSION of the Houston Botanic Garden is to enrich life through discovery, education, and the conservation of plants and the natural environment.

OUR GOALS

• Provide an oasis for contemplation, learning, inspiration, and research;
• Enrich people’s lives through outstanding displays and programs;
• Serve as a model for sustainability; and
• Inspire all children, adults, and families who visit to become environmental stewards as they learn more about plants and the natural world.

GLOBAL COLLECTION GARDEN, continued from page 1

In the arid area, The Drift will be reminiscent of an African desert, with clusters of feathered grasses sparsely scattered between boulders. Across the path, we will recreate the feel of the African desert using Texas natives, reinforcing the fact that different garden experiences can be accomplished through native plantings.

The soothing sound of the Dewdrop Fountain will greet visitors as they transition from the Drift to the Agave Garden. They will be awed by the size and color of the blue and green agave (Agave spp.) collections in the midst of an open desert.

In contrast, vibrant and exotic flowers will fill The Heart, creating an almost overwhelming lush, tropical experience. To take it all in, guests might choose to rest on stone benches lining the crescent-shape path with breathtaking views of the tropical paradise.

The Jungle will be a dense rainforest where guests will enjoy an immersive experience with misting trails surrounded by broad-leaf shrubs and banana trees (Musa spp.), palm trees (Arecaceae family), ferns and more. An open space will showcase beautiful, exotic, and tropical species. >>>
Outstanding collections of pines (Pinus spp.), camellias (Camellia spp.), azaleas (Rhododendron spp.), and more will take guests to the other side of the globe along The Asian Slope. The beautiful evergreen hill scattered with colorful flowering shrubs will serve as the backdrop to The Heart of the Garden. >>>

PLANT WITH PURPOSE – DAYLILY By Kackie Dunwoody

Joy. The moment your heart goes pitter pat and your spirits are lifted.

I spend a lot of time with my grandchildren these days, and they fill me with joy. Think wonderful moments of joy. Yesterday our 18-month-old granddaughter waved to me and blew a kiss goodbye; our grandson saw us arrive at his baseball game and hopped out of the dugout to give us a quick hug before the game. He was glad we were there and we were too. Five-year-olds are always glad to see you, grabbing your hand to hold or kiss; they want to walk your dog, get ice cream, just spend time with you. The ones who live out of town love to get a moment of face time with you – all smiles and big hugs.

I also spend a great deal of time outside in my garden where I find much joy and moments of surprise. Sweet fragrances abound, a monarch butterfly flits across my path, a cardinal pierces the morning air in song, a group of house wrens visits our bird-feeder as they pass through Houston, perennials are pushing up through the ground and fern fronds are unfolding. The wind brushes my face and the sun feels good on my back. A group of birds fly across the sky and I notice how beautiful the clouds are. I think the botanic garden will be like that—and a good place to cultivate memories.

Just like a good memory, daylily (Hemerocallis) is easy to cultivate. Give daylilies a good start in fertile soil with generous amounts of sun and their blooms will appear every day, and true to their name, last only a day. Plant them en masse or in small groups to get the full effect. They will form clumps and reward you with flowers that range in color from almost white to yellow and orange to dark purple and deepest red-black. There are hundreds of varieties. Most are evergreen or semi-evergreen with arching, strap-shaped dark green leaves. They bloom mainly from late spring to late summer, and a few bear nocturnal flowers.

One of my grandsons wrote an amazing piece last year when he was nine. I keep it framed in my home office to remind me of its importance. The title was The Meaning of Life. One sentence reads: “We all should strive to BE FULLY IN THE MOMENT, because that’s all life is, really, a string of moments that you knot together and carry with you.”

I am excited about the Houston Botanic Garden and the Global Collection Garden that will lift our spirits and connect us with nature, teach us about unfamiliar plant species, how they grow and attract pollinators. When it is open, look for Hemerocallis and think of the many joyful moments that enrich your life one day at a time. They may be fleeting but a good string to hold tight and carry with you.
SOIL STUDY UPDATE

Our Fall Newsletter featured a story about an exciting soil study to rehabilitate the degraded, clay-dominant and chemical-laden former golf course soil. The goal of this study was to determine what is required to transform the existing on-site soils into productive, biologically active and friable soils that will support the diverse plant collections planned for the Global Collection Garden and the restoration of native habitat throughout the property. The trial plots were established in late October 2018, tilled at various depths, amended with different types of compost and planted with fast-growing cover crops, such as tillage radish (Raphanus sativus var. niger), white clover (Dalea candida), sorghum-Sudangrass (Sorghum bicolor, var. sudanese), and sunn hemp (Crotalaria juncea).

Once planted, the plots were allowed to progress with the germination and growth of cover crops, with detailed observations in January and a final assessment in March. What did our trial study tell us?

**Cover Crops**

The tillage radish and the white clover took off and grew better than expected! However, a cold and wet winter in the Houston area affected two of the cover crops, sorghum-Sudangrass and sunn hemp. These crops are warm season plants that partially germinated early during the study, but were not able to tolerate the colder temperatures, and therefore, did not effectively grow.

**Next Steps** | HBG is re-seeding over the entire study area with sorghum-Sudangrass and sunn hemp. Now that we are entering the warmer months, these two cover crops will have another opportunity to transform the soil biology.

**Compost**

Not all compost is alike! Our trial demonstrated that compost purchased from different sources have varying effects on nutrient amounts and plant growth. Surprisingly, we also learned that the tillage radish performed better with only 3 inches of compost versus the more expensive application of 6 inches.

**Next Steps** | HBG is developing an onsite compost program so that we can control the feed stock and supply onsite compost for future amendments. When purchasing compost from an outside company, the Garden has less control over the quality of the compost and risks the introduction of chemicals and invasive weed seeds that can damage our fragile, yet resilient ecosystem. With the development of an onsite compost program, HBG will employ sustainable operating methods, thus reducing the need to purchase compost from an outside source, thereby decreasing expenses.

The lessons learned will be used in creating our Phase I gardens. Once garden construction starts, the precious 6 to 8 inches of existing top soil (“gray clay”) will be moved to a holding area. The existing onsite soil will be layered with compost and mixed, and cover crops will be planted. As gardens are ready to be planted, the monitored and protected soil will be moved to its final home in garden beds. We will reuse the existing onsite soil and reduce the amount of imported soil. Overall, our soil study illuminated various successes and challenges. With persistence, thoughtful stewardship, and careful, sustainable operating methods, the soil will support the beauty of the coming gardens.

Mark Your Calendars! See back cover for details!
GROW HOUSTON’S GARDEN CAMPAIGN

The Houston Botanic Garden is dedicated to bringing a major cultural institution to our great City. Many have answered the call to help fund Phase I of our visionary master plan to create a world-class botanic garden – THANK YOU! We are grateful for the outpouring of philanthropic support.

Phase I
In partnership with the City, the Houston Botanic Garden is being developed on a 132-acre site, located along Sims Bayou just south of the 610 Loop and a few blocks east of I-45. With close proximity to downtown Houston, Hobby Airport (international), and major freeways, HBG will be easily accessible to those who live throughout Houston, as well as out-of-town visitors.

The internationally renowned landscape design firm, West 8, helped us create a visionary master plan that provides a road map for developing HBG in phases over the next 30 years.

The $35 million Grow Houston’s Garden campaign will fund Phase I, which prioritizes feature gardens, lays down the critical infrastructure to support future growth, and includes guest amenities. Thanks to support from our lead donors and with 100% giving from our Board of Directors, we have raised $28 million and are 80% of the way to our $35 million goal.

Contributing to the Community
Botanic gardens are major contributors to their communities in a number of ways. Houston Botanic Garden will positively impact the City of Houston by:

- Providing a place for enjoyment, wonder, serenity, and for promoting healthier lives.
- Educating about the natural world and the importance of conserving biodiversity through a living classroom.
- Preserving precious green space in a densely populated and growing city.
- Revitalizing the local economy in the Glenbrook, Meadowbrook, and Park Place communities, in particular.

A Rare Opportunity
Being on the ground floor of creating something that will have a significant, positive impact on our community for generations to come is a rare opportunity. Our goal is to complete fundraising for Phase I this summer, which allows us to open the Garden next year, in 2020! Pledging now will also help Houston Botanic Garden leverage a $750,000 challenge grant from The J. E. and L. E. Mabee Foundation. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

Join Us!
We hope you will join our visionary supporters with a significant contribution to the Grow Houston’s Garden campaign to complete Phase I of this extraordinary cultural and educational icon. Please find our Donor Gift Form on our website at www.hbg.org in the SUPPORT section. Please join us as—together—we Grow Houston’s Garden.

CAMPAIGN LEADERSHIP
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Nancy O’Connor Abendshein
James A. Reeder, Jr.

CAMPAIGN COMMITTEE
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Dodie & Richard Jackson
Steven J. Lindley
Randell E. Meyer
Bass C. Wallace, Jr.
Laura & William M. Wheless III
Emily & Carlton D. Wilde, Jr.
MARGARET CARDWELL joined the team in early December as Development Associate, working with Laura Easton. Margaret is an Austin native who attended St. George’s School in Newport, Rhode Island and graduated from The University of Texas at Austin with a BA in Psychology. She has previously worked for Nurses Case Management, a home-health agency in Austin, and gained administrative experience while working for both Cardwell, Hart & Bennett, LLP and Longroad Asset Management, LLC. Margaret also had the unique experience of working for the Friedkin Conservation Fund in Tanzania for a summer, where she began her nonprofit experience. She is very excited to join the team and have the opportunity to be a part of HBG as it grows into a beautiful, natural oasis for Houston.

BRENT MOON joined HBG in February as Horticulture Manager, working with Joy Columbus. A native of Kentucky, his family raised purebred Angus cattle and Yorkshire hogs as well as crops such as soybeans, corn, and wheat. He obtained a Bachelor’s in Agriculture with a specialization in Horticulture from Murray State University and built his career in horticulture and landscape. Brent managed several acres of outdoor garden collections at the Missouri Botanic Garden from 1998-2003, then moved with his wife to Houston. He worked for the Houston Parks and Recreation Department from 2005-2019, managing their Horticulture Program for the past five years. Brent has a great love for the outdoors and looks forward to helping build a world-class botanical garden for all Houstonians and visitors to enjoy!

GARDEN CLUB OF HOUSTON VISITS

In February, Houston Botanic Garden warmly welcomed members of the Garden Club of Houston on a chilly, drizzly day for site-seeing and seedlings to learn more about and work in the Garden. Laura Easton made introductory remarks and thanked GCH for their tremendous support of the Grow Houston’s Garden campaign. Claudia Gee Vassar presented details for Phase I of the Garden.

Before lunch, Barry Ward, executive director of Trees For Houston, led a tree planting session. GCH ported almost 100 trees, including sweetgum (Liquidambar styraciflua), American elm (Ulmus americana), bald cypress (Taxodium distichum) and white oak (Quercus alba), which will be grown out for various reforestation areas on site. Joy Columbus led a tour to HBG’s soil study plots, and it was wonderful to see so many horticulturally-minded women in their element—loving dirt!

Garden Club of Houston is welcome back for another field trip to explore the Island! Houston Botanic Garden is so thankful for our many partners, supporters, visitors, and volunteers!

SPRING SATURDAY SERIES | Connecting People with Plants and Nature

Houston Botanic Garden has kicked-off its Spring Saturday Series, providing educational workshops with partner organizations one Saturday each month, which runs from March through June.

The theme of the series is Connecting People with Plants and Nature and provides guests of all ages engaging and interactive experiences to gain a deeper appreciation of the wonder of plants and nature. Each of these Saturdays also offers a walking tour of the site of the future Gardens.

The first Saturday Series took place on March 30 with Katy Prairie Conservancy. At the family workshop, children participated in hands-on activities learning about the grasses and wildflowers of the prairies of Texas and planted a seedling to take home. An adult workshop highlighting planting for pollinators followed, where local expert Susie Marten shared information on the importance of native plants that attract pollinators as well as tips on choosing and planting native plants in their own gardens.
Houston Botanic Garden’s Global Collection Garden will display plants from around the world, most of which are native to three climate zones: Arid, Tropical and Subtropical. With proper care and maintenance, plants from these climates will flourish in our Global Garden.

Arid climates cover 33% of the earth and receive less than 10 inches of rain per year. While some arid regions have very little temperature change, others experience hot days and freezing nights, making it possible for a person to suffer heat-stroke and hypothermia in a single day. Death Valley and the Atacama Desert are two examples of extreme arid climates.

Tropical climates are near the equator between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn and have an average temperature above 64 degrees. The tropics have only two seasons: the dry and wet seasons with most of the rainfall occurring when the sun is directly overhead. The Amazon and Congo Basins are the most famous tropical regions.

Subtropical climates border the tropics north of the Tropic of Cancer and south of the Tropic of Capricorn and are characterized by hot, humid summers and mild to cool winters with evenly distributed rainfall throughout the year. The North Island of New Zealand is sub-tropic.

Examples of plants from these climate zones that may be found on display in the Global Collection Garden include palo verde (Parkinsonia florid) native to the arid states of the Southwest, the spider lily (Hymenocallis speciosa) from the tropical climates of Central and South America, and blue bamboo (Bambusa chungii) found in the subtropical region of Vietnam.

THE GARDENS AT TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

Our HBG Team visited the recently completed Phase 1 of The Gardens at Texas A&M University (TAMU). We met with Joseph Johnson, the Gardens Manager, who served previously as the Director of Horticulture with Shangri La Botanical Gardens and Nature Center in Orange, TX. Joseph shared very helpful background information on the project, including financials, campaign information, and site statistics. He gave a tour of the gardens, which are an important teaching tool for a variety of classes on campus. Joseph shared TAMU’s successes and challenges to inform HBG’s planning process.

Dr. Bill Welch joined Joseph and the team for lunch, where we continued the conversation on how to create a world-class botanic garden for Houston.

MERCER BOTANIC GARDENS

Joy Columbus and Claudia Gee Vassar toured Mercer Botanic Gardens with interim director, Chris Ludwig. Chris is currently leading Mercer’s efforts to focus on improving Mercer’s flood resiliency and carrying out a new master plan. Chris shared very helpful information about the operations and maintenance of Mercer and updated us on their recovery efforts.

LBJ HOSPITAL COMMUNITY GARDEN

Claudia and Joy also visited the LBJ Hospital Community Garden by invitation from Hilary Yu-Heng Ma, a medical oncologist at MD Anderson and Chief of Oncology at LBJ Hospital. The farm at LBJ was conceived as a public health intervention to improve nutrition and physical activity level in the hugely underserved area of NE Harris County, LBJ’s catchment area. We discussed the installation of a community farm (similar to our future community garden) and potential partnership opportunities.

BotaniQ Note

This exquisite chalk maple (Acer leucoderme) was featured in our Fall Newsletter. Our many thanks to the photographer, Carolyn Fannon, for sharing this with us!
BOTANICAL BEGINNINGS LUNCHEON 2019

SAVE THE DATE!

Mark Your Calendars!

MAY 11 | World Migratory Bird Day workshops for families and adults with Houston Audubon
JUNE 1  | The Importance of Trees (family workshop) and Tree ID and Planting Tips (adult workshop) with Trees For Houston

For more information and to register, please visit www.HBG.org/engage.