Collaboration with Trees For Houston

Creating a botanic garden is a complex, multi-faceted endeavor. From irrigation plans and soil selections to educational programming and research opportunities, staffing and community outreach to fundraising a major capital campaign, numerous people are working on all the aspects needed to make the Houston Botanic Garden a first rate visitor experience. We are not doing all of this work alone. Houston is filled with people and organizations with tremendous experience and expertise that can help us create a world class botanic garden. This is a city-wide effort, and we are so fortunate to collaborate with some of Houston’s brightest who are passionate about HBG’s project.

We are thrilled to partner with one such organization who is working to transform Houston through planting, protecting, and promoting trees—Trees For Houston. Since being founded in 1983, Trees For Houston has planted over half a million trees in the Greater Houston region. With their extensive experience and depth of knowledge, Trees For Houston has agreed to operate a tree farm for all of HBG’s reforestation trees. The tree farm will be installed once HBG takes possession of the site. Over 1,000 trees will comprise this roughly 2-acre tree farm, with TFH caring for approximately 40 distinct species. By growing the trees on site, HBG will be able to more efficiently install more mature trees and create a better visitor experience on opening day.

HBG plans to host events at the tree farm to help educate visitors about trees that grow well in Houston and how to care for them. We hope that this partnership is one of many that bring together Houston’s best to Grow Houston’s Garden.
Letter from the Board Chair

Dear Friends,

What a warm and exciting Fall! The Autumn season represents change—and what a time of change it has been for the Houston Botanic Garden.

As 2017 comes to a close, we are working with our team of designers, consultants, and engineers to finalize our schematic design plans for phase one of the Garden. The past few months have been filled with exploring everything from bridge designs to stormwater wetlands to seasonal display gardens and more! The renderings are stunning, and our planning committee is confident in decisions being made to build a spectacular Garden.

We held our third Botanical Beginnings Luncheon in October, and it was such a fun and festive success! I had my face painted, savored some "witches brew", and enjoyed a virtual reality tour of the Garden. Beyond the fun, it was truly an honor to share the updates of the Garden with so many incredible individuals. The ballroom of River Oaks Country Club was captivated by West 8’s presentation and inspired by the fact that this dream is quickly becoming reality.

At the luncheon, we had the pleasure of announcing that we reached our $20 million milestone for the City of Houston. We are one step closer to reaching our $30 million capital campaign goal.

This is such an exciting time for the Houston Botanic Garden. Thank you for embracing the vision and supporting our efforts to Grow Houston’s Garden. I hope you all have a wonderful holiday season.

Nancy O’Connor Abendshein
Board Chair

Grow Houston’s Garden
To-Date: $21.6 million
Each leaf represents $1 million

The enclosed envelope has instructions on how you can make your end of year gift today!

HBG celebrates Claudia Gee Vassar

After serving as Interim Executive Director for just over a year, the HBG Board of Directors voted to offer Claudia the role of Executive Director and General Counsel. The Board, staff, and community partners are all very excited to continue under Claudia’s leadership as we Grow Houston’s Garden. As a native Houstonian, she brings a wealth of knowledge and passion to this project for the City of Houston, in addition to nonprofit expertise. It is an honor to have her as the organization’s leader.
Hurricane Harvey

While so much of our city was devastated, we were fortunate that Hurricane Harvey had minimal impact on the future home of the Houston Botanic Garden.

Hurricane Harvey was the wettest tropical hurricane on record in the contiguous United States. Parts of Houston received over 50” of rainfall. An estimated 25-30% of Harris County was submerged. The flooding and devastation across our city was heartbreaking.

And yet, in spite of the record-breaking amount of water that fell over such a short period of time, Sims Bayou never left its banks. The Sims Bayou watershed is a relatively small watershed. Sims also recently underwent a nearly $400 million project to reduce overbank flooding. Harvey was a pretty good test of whether the future home of the HBG could withstand a major rainfall event. We are fortunate to say that Sims Bayou passed the test.

HBG is even more acutely aware of the role that we can play in inspiring environmental stewards and creating a more sustainable world. We also are mindful that heavy rainfall events will happen again, so we will ensure we protect precious collections and valuable assets from future rainfall events.

BotanIQ

Did you know that green infrastructure plays a critical role in the improvement of our water system?

Not only does natural land mitigate flood risk by slowing and reducing stormwater discharge, but living organisms in the soil actually help to filter out toxins in collected rainwater before it flows steadily into our waterways.

Green infrastructure such as stormwater wetlands (which the Houston Botanic Garden plans to have) provide significant environmental and economic benefits.
The Oxblood Lily

*Rhodophiala bifida*, Oxblood Lily is a Southern heirloom bulb that is a relative of the Amaryllis. It naturalizes in Texas and blooms in late summer/early fall. The bright, fiery red blooms seem to suddenly appear and the leaves follow as the blooms fade. They are a welcome addition of color as other summer blooms begin to die back.

Long before there were telephones and email, Texas settlers planted these bulbs in large drifts around public buildings, especially schoolhouses. The fall blooms signaled it was time for the children to return to school after the summer break, hence the common name, Schoolhouse Lily.

*submitted by Dodie Jackson*

Your friends at Houston Botanic Garden wish you the happiest of holidays!
Old and new friends of the Houston Botanic Garden gathered at River Oaks Country Club for the third biennial luncheon on October 31st. Over 500 guests came to support the Grow Houston’s Garden campaign and celebrate reaching the significant milestone of raising $20 million. The City of Houston set a December 31, 2017 deadline, and HBG met it two months early! The luncheon itself raised over $480,000.

Prior to the program, guests mingled in the foyer while bidding on silent auction items and sipping themed cocktails. In the spirit of Halloween, guests were also treated to having their face painted, with several opting for chic Astros designs.

Live tree performers roamed the salon, adding to the festive ambiance. Swift + Company and Krissi Reid generously donated the fun décor, and H-E-B Central Market provided the lovely floral arrangements. Guests were also given a unique opportunity to experience the future botanic garden through a virtual reality simulation. The cocktail hour was such a great time that no one was ready to go into the ballroom when the bells chimed.

Serving as emcee was board member, Jim Reeder, who kicked off the program by welcoming Mayor Pro Tem Ellen Cohen to the podium to give remarks on behalf of the City of Houston. Following the Mayor Pro Tem, the luncheon program continued as West 8’s Principal and Senior Architect, Claire Agre, presented the vision for the Garden and the highlights of what Houstonians will experience in Phase 1. These presentations and the video that was shown gave guests a true picture of what the Garden will look like and how beneficial it will be for Houston. “We have a unique opportunity to put a stamp on our city here today,” Jim Reeder inspired the crowd.

All in all, the Botanical Beginnings Luncheon was fun, educational, and left guests feeling excited for the wonderful Garden that is to come.
A Heartfelt Thanks to our Underwriters & Sponsors

**Towering Trees**
Nancy & Butch Abendsehn, Denise & David C. Baggett, Mary & John Eads, and Shelli & Steve Lindley

**Splendid Shrubs**
Mary Beth & Johnny Arcidiacono, Patsy Cravens, and Ellen & Alfred Lee
Cathy & Joe Cleary
Coneway Family Foundation
Muffy McLanahan and Muffet Blake
Ginni & Richard Mithoff
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**Flourishing Flowers**
Nancy C. Allen
Elizabeth & Bill Boss
Botanic Garden Friends:
Emily Crosswell, Linda Debrovner, Clare Glassell, Flo McGee, Lynda Underwood, Linda Walker
Minnie & Ed Cappel
Anthony Chase
Flo Crady and Eric Nevil 
Jim Reeder
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Lucy & David Barrow, Adele Bentzen, Sharon Bryan, Kelli Cravens, Clayton Erikson, Judy Lee, Nena Marsh, Sheila Mayfield, Vivie O’Sullivan

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