HOUSTON BOTANIC GARDEN

SUMMER 2018

COMMUNITY GARDEN COMING SOON

For a large number of neighboring residents, buying fresh produce, particularly organic, can be hard to find and expensive. And even for those inclined to grow their own fruits and vegetables, many do not have the space or knowledge. With a local community garden, participants will have the opportunity to grow their own produce in a safe and friendly location at a very low cost with the assistance of classes and learning from one another.

Community Gardens are a great way to connect communities. Local gardeners can share their experiences and skills to help others properly maintain their growing plants. Spreading the practice of healthy gardening can lead to a positive impact in our community. The significant benefits of gardening and the development of healthier eating habits can lead to a longer, healthier life. In addition, the community garden will serve as a form of horticulture therapy confirmed by the many studies showing that greens spaces reduce stress and increase relaxation and enjoyment of life.

The Houston Botanic Garden is currently in the early stages of developing a community garden. After gathering feedback from the surrounding neighborhoods, the process of planning how the community garden will function has begun. We have identified a location along Glenview Drive that will be dedicated to this nearly 2-acre project. Participants in the community garden may rent allotment plots for their own use or volunteer in community plots in exchange for some of the harvest. The garden will also contain a citrus tree orchard, a shed for tool storage, an outdoor classroom, and plenty of shaded areas where gardeners can relax, connect with their neighbors, and admire the results of their efforts.

Community members that are interested in leading this effort have started forming a steering committee to plan the garden and its operations. Members have visited a couple of community gardens across Houston to learn best practices and for inspiration. Please contact the Houston Botanic Garden office if you are interested in getting involved.

HBG TAKES ROOT WITH A TREE FARM

On May 19th, the Houston Botanic Garden, in its first community event hosted on the grounds, began the creation of its reforestation tree farm. Partnering with Trees For Houston, over 100 volunteers from across the city arrived willing and eager to help. In addition to volunteers of all ages, Council Member Robert Gallegos and former Mayor Annise Parker also participated in the event. Through the partnership with Trees For Houston, we are able to build our tree collections with locally grown plant material. By growing our trees on site, we will be able to provide the trees the healthiest growing conditions, reduce transport shock, and increase the size of trees without increasing the cost of buying and transporting adult trees. Thanks to everyone who helped with our very first stage of Growing Houston's Garden! Keep an eye out for upcoming tree planting events.

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From the Board Chair

Dear Friends,

Spring has bloomed at the Houston Botanic Garden. As you may have seen in the paper, we took possession of the 120-acre Sims Bayou site on April 2nd, and it has since been an exciting whirlwind of activity! Thank you for staying engaged and for your ongoing interest in the the Garden. I want to share some of the wonderful things that have happened in 2018:

- We are near completion of design development and starting construction documents.
- We are in the final stages of hiring a General Contractor to lead our construction efforts, which will begin later this year.
- We have hired Joy Columbus as our Vice President of Horticulture.
- Reforestation trees are growing on the site.
- Renovations to turn the existing clubhouse into our education and administrative space will begin soon.

These are just a few of the milestones the Houston Botanic Garden has reached thus far in 2018 when we began the physical transformation of a golf course into a botanic garden. We continue to make strides in our fundraising, community outreach, and in the planning of the Garden. Our team of project leaders, staff, consultants, and volunteers is growing, bringing even more talented minds to the project. I am so proud of the work being done, and I cannot wait to see what the next season will bring.

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.

We Love Our Interns!

The Houston Botanic Garden is lucky to have three amazing interns this summer. Maria Sorto is a junior Business Management major at University of Texas San Antonio, Senior Ryan Lawhon is majoring in Landscape Horticulture at Texas A&M University, and Jackie Richards is studying Earth Science and Photography as a junior at Rice University. They all bring passion and a youthful work ethic to the Houston Botanic Garden team. We are grateful for their efforts in planning volunteer events, spearheading the community garden, supporting development and marketing efforts and more.
Texas Wildflowers

As any Texan will tell you, it is a rite of passage each spring to load the kids in the car, head to open country, and snap the proverbial “kids and bluebonnets” picture. Many of us have done it, even if the subject matter is a bit... overexposed. But who can blame us? When in bloom, our state flower, the Bluebonnet (Lupinus texensis), spreads its luxurious, cobalt blue color over miles and miles of Texas countryside. No other wildflower comes close to its coverage and intensity, and thus the need for those photographs. But there are other beautiful, if a bit more subdued, contributors to the springtime flower show along our Texas highways, and the Houston Botanic Garden plans to bring a bit of that beauty to its grounds.

The Texas Department of Transportation estimates that there are over 5,000 species of wildflowers and native grasses in Texas, and while planting them all is a bit too ambitious, the Houston Botanic Garden will have several areas where visitors can appreciate the beauty of these plants. Texas Indian Paintbrush (Castilleja indivisa), Pink Evening Primrose (Oenothera speciosa), and the elegant, magenta Winecups (Callirhoe involucrata) might be spotted growing among the Bluebonnets. Wild grasses, with their own special beauty, are invaluable assets for water conservation and erosion control throughout Texas. Buffalo grass (Bouteloua dactyloides), the state’s only true native grass, and Side oats grama (Bouteloua curtipendula), the State Grass of Texas, are just two possibilities for the gardens.

Wildflowers and grasses are an integral part of the beauty that is Texas. Houston Botanic Garden’s wildflower areas will give visitors a glimpse of that beauty as well as educate them on the importance of these wild plants that grow around us. It will be exciting to see what varieties of wildflowers are ultimately on display.

- submitted by Elizabeth Boss

BotanIQ

SURVIVING SUMMER RAINS

BEFORE THE RAIN:

Remove damaged shoots and limbs
Before an expected rain storm, remove any dead shoots and limbs from your plants to make them as streamlined as possible. This will also reduce the risk of snapping and tangling.

Support taller plants
Heavy rain can compromise taller, less secure plants, especially when accompanied by strong winds. Push a wooden or metal support into the ground and gently tie the plant to it. This will protect it from damage and prevent it from snapping.

Check the drainage
To avoid water pooling and potentially drowning the plants in your garden, make sure you have adequate drainage that is unblocked and clear of debris. Ensure there is proper runoff that slopes away from the garden.

Cover the most delicate plants
If the rain is hard and persistent, use a waterproof covering such as row covers to cover young and fragile plants, including herbs and vegetables. Make sure the covering is slanted away from the foliage to ensure drainage.

AFTER THE RAIN:

Check your vegetable roots
Once the rain has stopped, make sure there are no exposed roots caused by soil erosion. Recover them with soil or compost before they dry out and harm the plant.

Check your pots and planters
These can flood easily if the drainage is compromised. Check pots and planters before, during and after rain and cover if necessary.

Pull up weeds by hand
The moist soil allows for easier removal of the whole root without it snapping or breaking.

Turn your compost
Make sure all of your compost is watered by mixing the damp, upper layers with the dry, under layers.
Addition to the Team

The Houston Botanic Garden is excited that Joy Columbus has joined our growing team as Vice President of Horticulture. Joy will lead the effort to articulate and develop the Houston Botanic Garden’s horticultural program, build our horticulture team, and oversee plant conservation and landscape management.

Joy previously served as the Director of Horticulture at Cantigny Park in Wheaton, Illinois. She successfully initiated and coordinated the development of Project New Leaf, a multi-phase $35 million campus revitalization encompassing most of the 500-acre estate. The project includes renovations to the framework of the historic garden and the development of new garden attractions.

Prior to her time at Cantigny Park, Joy worked with the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historical Preservation as well as the Cleveland Botanical Garden. She received her Master of Science in Biology from John Carroll University. She also holds a Bachelor of Arts in botany with an environmental emphasis and a minor in horticulture. “I am thrilled to join a wonderfully dynamic group, working to grow a sustainable garden for generations of Houstonians to enjoy,” said Columbus. “It’s an honor to be on the forefront of what will be a major cultural asset to this city and region.”