



# 2023 Annual Report



Naples  
Botanical  
Garden™

# From our Leadership

Could it be that the Garden went an entire year without a disaster?

I am almost hesitant to put that sentence on paper, lest I trigger some sort of cosmic backlash, but it seems that 2023 was the first “normal” year of my tenure.

I use that term in the hurricane-, pandemic-, algae-, mosquito-free sense of the word. There is no “normal” year in Garden operations as we are constantly building upon our previous accomplishments.

This past year offers a prime example. We watched the Evenstad Horticulture Campus — one of the only tropical growing operations in the United States — emerge from the landscape.

In early 2024, we'll move into this space and begin transforming our work.



Meanwhile, we delved into research on beach dunes and the role they play in protecting the coast. We've come up with a formula for restoration, one that uses a multitude of native plants, with each species playing a distinct role in the ecosystem.

We opened 2023 with *Frida and Her Garden*, an ambitious exhibition more than a year in the making. It was the focal point of our 2022-23 season, *Mexico: A Celebration of Plants & Culture*, our first concerted effort to shine a lens on a culture, its plants, foods, arts, and traditions. We were thrilled with the outcome and will use the season as a template for programming in years to come.

I hope you enjoy this look back at the many accomplishments of 2023 and celebrate your role in making them happen.

A stylized black ink signature of Donna McGinnis.

**Donna McGinnis**  
President & CEO





My family was among those who, many years ago, believed that Naples deserved to have its own botanical garden. As I reflect on 2023, I am touched by how many community members continue to support this organization. With their backing, the Garden accomplished big things — from advancing plant science to furthering environmental education to organizing an absolute blockbuster year of exhibitions and special programming.

*Hats in the Garden* is always an exquisite event, and the 19th annual edition was no exception. Shelly Stayer, a member of the Board of Directors and Sustaining Leadership Council, hosted this record-breaking day, raising almost \$2.7 million in

support of the Garden's mission. Johnsonville Night Lights in the Garden



wrapped up our year with records of its own. The Garden hosted more than 56,000 guests at this celebration of winter in the tropics, raising \$1.6 million.

The Garden's Royal Palm Society includes those of you who give at least \$1,500 annually. The group is now larger than ever with over 600 member households (full listing begins on page 27). Your continued support is vital to the Garden's mission. A special thank you to our Garden Visionaries, those who give at least \$25,000 annually. You truly make our mission possible.

While the Garden continually grows bigger and better, it also stays true to its roots. Our campus remains an oasis in a busy world. It provides beauty and serenity for all who enter its gates. For those of us who remember the early days, thank you for your longtime investment and trust. For those who are newer to our cause, welcome to this special and cherished place. We have only just begun.

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Kathleen Kapnick".

**Kathleen Kapnick**  
Chair, Board of Directors

## Garden Facts 2023

**260,000**  
visitors

**\$16 million**  
operating budget

**165**  
employees

**15,000**  
member households



**1.5 million** impressions  
**53,000** engagements



**15 million** impressions  
**426,000** engagements

**90,400**  
master email list

**400,000**  
website visitors

# Harnessing & Buffering Nature's Power

## Beach Dune Restoration

A long-running beach dune research project took on new urgency in the wake of Hurricane Ian. Dunes act as nature's defense system, dissipating energy and lessening the impact of wind and water damage. With input from Florida Gulf Coast University researchers, Garden conservationists drafted a dune restoration blueprint that uses multiple native species strategically planted to mimic a natural coastal ecosystem. Staff collected seeds and cuttings from area beaches for propagation, yielding tens of thousands of plants representing 16 species. We're sharing our insights with local governments, including the City of Naples, City of Sanibel, Town of Fort Myers Beach, Collier County, and State of Florida.







### **Did you know?**

Before we can propagate coastal plants (or many other native plants) from seed, we need to figure out what prompts them to germinate. We ran the dune seeds through approximately 10 experiments per species, from soaking them in water to scarifying their seed coats, to figure out what factors encourage sprouting. All told, our conservation horticulture specialists have 121 propagation protocols (instructions for how to grow a plant from seed) in development and more than 21,000 seeds planted in propagation trials. These include dune plants and inland species.

### **Thank You, Foundations!**

We could not have launched the beach dune restoration project without the significant investment of the Collier Community Foundation, which has supported startup costs and the development of coastal resilience education programs. We are also grateful to the Second Chance Foundation's contributions toward this important work.

### **Hats Off to the Sustaining Leadership Council**

The Sustaining Leadership Council is a group of 46 women who serve as our Garden's ambassadors. They are the force behind *Hats in the Garden*, an annual celebration that generates a significant portion of our operating revenue and funds special initiatives. In 2023, the *Hats* Fund-a-Need raised more than \$1 million for resiliency efforts. (See page 13 for more on *Hats*.)





# Protecting our Flora for the Future

Plants that are here today may be gone tomorrow. That's why we're amassing and storing native seeds. Our efforts will ensure generations to come enjoy the flora that surrounds us today.



Seed collection on Keewaydin Island

## Plant Collecting

We made over **28 expeditions** across **four conservation lands**, to collect native plant seeds. More than 20 people embarked on these efforts, including Garden staff, area land managers, and university researchers.

Naples Botanical Garden has the region's only **conservation seed bank**. Our holdings include more than **230,000 seeds** representing **61 species**. Of these, **19 species** grow only in Southwest Florida and **30** are underrepresented in botanical collections. That means few — if any — other organizations protect their genetics.

The Garden is **one of nine** institutions participating in the Center for Plant Conservation's **Florida Plant Rescue**. This initiative seeks to identify and bank the seeds of rare and endangered native plants. In 2023, Garden conservationists spanned **18 square miles** at the Fred C. Babcock/Cecil M. Webb Wildlife Management Area in Charlotte County looking for the Punta Gorda spider lily (*Hymenocallis puntagordensis*), pictured right. They mapped **180 plants** and collected more than **20 seeds**. They also surveyed portions of Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve looking for the giant orchid (*Orthochilus ecristatus*). Alas, that plant has not been seen since Hurricane Ian.



Punta Gorda spider lily

## Conservation Collections

Crop wild relatives are wild-growing botanical cousins of cultivated food crops. Scientists are breeding some wild traits into crops to help our fruits, vegetables, nuts, grains, and legumes resist disease, adapt to temperature changes, and withstand other stressors. Over the past year, we identified **120 netted pawpaw** (*Asimina reticulata*) in our Preserve. These are related to an edible pawpaw fruit found in temperate regions. We also have **800 swamp bay trees** (*Persea palustris*), avocado relatives, in our nursery.

The Puerto Rican cacti collection has grown to more than **1,000 plants** representing **12 species**. Garden staff worked with botanists in Puerto Rico to collect seeds and cuttings a few years ago as two invasive insects spread diseases that kill the plants in their native habitat. We've been protecting and multiplying the plants since.



Cacti collecting in Puerto Rico





## Hamilton Avenue Bioswale Project

Plants protect water by filtering pollutants that cause contamination and algae growth. Many toxins enter waterways via rain that washes over pavement. A parking area for a new county boat ramp adjacent to the Garden creates more such runoff. Working with Collier County, we agreed to direct the runoff onto our property and install a bioswale to help absorb the water. Our bioswale contains nearly **3,500 native plants** and serves as an important stormwater management demonstration area.



## Conserving Plants & Their Habitats

We knew we had an abundance of plants in our Preserve, but a new study shows just how much biodiversity we harbor — and why protecting this land is so important. With assistance from our staff, George Wilder, founder and curator of the Herbarium of Southwestern Florida, and Naples-based ecologist Jean McCollom published a floristic inventory of our Preserve in the *Journal of the Botanical Research Institute of Texas*.

They documented:

**7**

habitat types

**576**

total  
plant species

**414**

native plant  
species

**13**

species that grow  
only in Florida

**9**

state-endangered  
species

**8**

state-threatened  
species

**32** species plus two varieties newly reported in Collier County









## Fire: Nature's Rejuvenation

It seems counterintuitive, but fire's destructive force is a key to ecosystem health. In 2023, the Garden launched a prescribed fire regimen for portions of the Preserve that depend on an occasional blaze to function at their best. With the help from area land managers and a certified fire manager, we conducted four burns in the Garden's natural areas, igniting 13.5 acres — about 17.5% of the fire-dependent habitats.



### *Did you know?*

- Fire promotes biodiversity. It clears shrubs and opens the tree canopy, allowing in more sunlight and fostering new growth.
- We take numerous precautions to protect our neighbors during these controlled burns. One is maintaining 3.7 acres worth of fire breaks, or pathways cleared of plants and debris designed to contain blazes.
- Burning the Preserve makes our neighborhood safer. Fire consumes debris such as pine needles that otherwise accumulates and could fuel a wildfire.
- Our team keeps their skills sharp by participating in the South Florida Prescribed Fire Working Group. Members of this multiagency collaborative depend on each other to conduct burns and keep the region's ecosystems healthy. Garden conservationists assisted with nine burns totalling nearly 6,600 acres across Southwest Florida.



# The Ever-Growing Garden



## Succulent Garden Expands

The weird and wonderful world of succulents and cacti got, well, weirder and more wonderful. Thanks to a gift from Edward and Judith Bergauer, the Foster Succulent Garden doubled in size, expanding across the pathway and offering guests a fully immersive experience. The plant families featured in this garden are among the most charismatic of the botanical world, with nail-sharp spines, giant flower spikes, water-storing trunks, and twisting, turning structures that make them visitor (and staff) favorites.



## Living Collections

The Garden's ever-growing collection includes **52,000 plants** logged in our database. About **20,000** of those are on display in our cultivated gardens, parking lots, and streetscape, just waiting to be viewed! Those figures don't include the annuals that add pops of seasonal color or the plants in our Preserve.

The aftermath of 2022's Hurricane Ian, a record-hot summer, and a drought made our horticultural work especially difficult in 2023. Nevertheless, we added **5,400 new plants** to the collection.

We're grateful to plant collectors who surprise us with botanical gifts. In 2023, we received more than **1,500 plants** from **Robert Hague**, a collector in Venice, Florida. The specimens include orchids, bromeliads, succulents, and aroids, all in pristine condition.

Following last summer's American Public Gardens Association conference in Dallas/Fort Worth, we began our collaboration with **Fort Worth Botanic Garden** in earnest, bringing home hundreds of specimens from their accredited begonia collection. Eventually, our friends in Fort Worth hope to back up their entire collection with us. Watch for enhancements to our begonia displays in 2024, thanks to a gift from donor Christine Williamson.





## Evenstad Horticulture Campus

In early 2024, the team will settle into the new Evenstad Horticulture Campus, the most significant expansion and investment in the Garden since its opening. With over 60,000 square feet of growing space, the campus will propel the Garden into its next phase. With virtually no blueprint to follow — tropical growing operations are rare in the U.S. — our staff reached out to growers as far away as Singapore to research the technology, design, and special features best suited to our collections and aspirations.

The campus's landscape design is all ours. Staff horticulturists planted some 80 trees and palms and 3,000 shrubs and groundcovers — much of it from our own inventory, saving some \$20,000. The landscape features primarily

native trees, such as shortleaf fig (*Ficus citrifolia*) and gumbo limbo (*Bursera simaruba*). We incorporated numerous Caribbean species, such as wild tamarind (*Lysiloma sabicu*) and cliff bromeliad (*Pitcairnia angustifolia*), and a few unusual specimens, including *Terminalia bentzoe* subsp. *rodriguesensis*, the same species Vice President of Horticulture Brian Galligan is working to save on Rodrigues Island (see page 20). We also see landscaping as a conservation measure. Our campus includes threatened native species, such as Krug's holly (*Ilex krugiana*).



# Festivals & Special Events

We think every day is special at Naples Botanical Garden. But we love to create extra special days in the form of events, festivals, and after-hours gatherings to encourage families and friends to come together, make memories, and relax amid nature's beauty.



## Plein Air Fest - New in 2023!

From the French meaning, "in the open air," Plein Air Fest offered guests an opportunity to see over a dozen masterful local artists interpret the Garden on canvas and sketch pad. The event also offered hands-on activities to inspire the inner artist in all of us. The event was so popular that we brought it back for 2024!

## Sunset Wednesdays

Raise your hand if you need a midweek break! We introduced special programming to our already popular Sunset Wednesdays in 2022. When people signed up in droves, we knew we needed to do even more in 2023. Our offerings ranged from cocktail scavenger hunts to crafting flower crowns reminiscent of Frida Kahlo. Block off your 2024 Wednesday evenings for more such outings.

## Family Wonder Days

We tap into children's innate curiosity in Family Wonder Days, a two-day affair that encourages exploration of the natural world. Kids (and their grown-up companions) discovered wonders such as monarch migration, pollination, and how animals use plants.

## Tasting the Tropics

Tasting the Tropics encourages guests to expand their palettes beyond apples, oranges, and grapes by sampling delicacies like mangos, dragonfruit, and rambutan. This past July, more than 1,300 guests flocked to the Garden to taste a tropical bounty and enjoy demonstrations, how-tos, and fruit-themed guided tours. We supplied more than 300 pounds of fruit!

## Waterlily Weekend

September in Florida is hot, yet there is something quite refreshing about touring our water gardens and experiencing 300-plus waterlilies, which are in their full glory in late summer. We hosted our first Waterlily Weekend photo competition, which yielded more than 150 entries in the color, black & white, and manipulated categories.



## Día de los Muertos Celebration

After the extraordinary response to its 2022 debut, we knew we had to make our Día de los Muertos Celebration an annual affair. The first weekend of November, the Garden sprang to life with music, dance, and food and abounded with marigolds, flowers believed to attract souls. The display included four new Catrina sculptures by California-based artist Ricardo Soltero, whose 2022 *La Calavera Catrina* exhibition kicked off our season of Mexico-related programming. Individuals and community groups set up *ofrendas*, or altars, in Kapnick Hall to commemorate beloved family and friends. In all, more than 3,400 people attended the two-day celebration. Outside the Garden, we also provided material for a *Día de los Muertos* display at the South Regional Library in Naples, including Soltero's papier mâché skulls.

## Johnsonville Night Lights in the Garden

This most wonderful time of the year does wonders for our ability to advance our mission. In 2023, we celebrated the season with 56,000 Johnsonville Night Lights in the Garden guests, offering more nights than ever and generating \$1.6 million toward the Garden's operating budget.

## Hats in the Garden

Nearly 700 guests — an all-time high — enjoyed a unique interpretation of “Paris in the Springtime” for the 2023 *Hats in the Garden* gala. Shelly Stayer, a member of the Garden's Board of Directors and Sustaining Leadership Council, set the mood and vision for the 19th-annual luncheon and fashion show, featuring the designs of Oscar de la Renta and the florals of 50/Fifty. The event raised almost \$2.7 million toward the Garden's mission and the Fund-a-Need, Protecting Paradise.



### Did you know?

- Our highest grossing ticket sale day took place during Johnsonville Night Lights in the Garden, generating **\$131,409** with **4,190** tickets sold. Every ticket purchased helps support the Garden's mission!
- Our Visitor Services staff answered **14,000** calls in 2023!



# FRIDA AND HER GARDEN

The year kicked off with the biggest exhibition in Garden history, a tribute to Mexican artist Frida Kahlo focusing on her connection to plants. Kahlo (1907–1954) was best known for her soul-searing self-portraits. But she also fostered a deep appreciation of nature and spent much time in her garden at *La Casa Azul*, the Blue House, in Mexico City where she was born and later died. Our team spent more than a year preparing for the exhibition, from sourcing plants to reimagining landscapes. The Naples, Marco Island, Everglades Convention & Visitors Bureau awarded this exhibition its Arts & Culture Award during its 2023 Tourism Star Awards ceremony.

## Special Visitors

We were thrilled to welcome **Mara Romero Kahlo** and **Mara de Anda Romero**, the granddaughter and great-granddaughter of Frida Kahlo's sister, who offered a family perspective on "Aunt Frida." They participated in a public meet-and-greet and shared family recipes for a private dinner for Garden patrons. "She was this amazing painter, but she was also a woman, a sister, a niece, an aunt, a friend, and a caring community member," Mara Kahlo told us.

We were treated to a visit from **Perla LaBarthe**, general coordinator of Museo Frida Kahlo, the artist's Mexico City home that was immortalized as a museum. "I think a wonderful way to start learning about Frida is through her garden," LaBarthe said. "I think nature is one of the most amazing sources of inspiration for many, many artists."

Other visiting dignitaries included **Jonathan Chait**, Consul General of Mexico in Miami, **Adriana Torres Sanchez**, director of the Cultural Institute of Mexico in Miami, and **Luis Rodrigo Saldaña** of the Banco de México Trust.

## High School Field Trips

We noticed an uptick in high school groups, mostly Spanish and art classes, requesting Garden tours during the *Frida and Her Garden* exhibition. We were thrilled to share what we'd learned about the legendary painter, her culture, and her sources of inspiration.

## Spotlight on Mexican Cuisine

**The Fogg Café** team developed a special menu for the 2022–23 *Mexico: A Celebration of Plants & Culture* theme. Utilizing the knowledge and techniques of Mexican-born staff members, the team rolled out carnitas, elote dip, ceviche, tostadas, and more. Their efforts caught the attention of area food writers and won the **Culinary Innovation Award** at the Tourism Star Awards.

## Hispanic Community Connections

*Frida* and other Mexican-themed exhibitions and events brought us closer to the region's growing Hispanic community. In 2023, we organized the second **Celebration of Hispanic Business**, an opportunity to connect with area movers and shakers, as well as hosted a **Southwest Florida Hispanic Chamber of Commerce** networking event.



Mara Romero Kahlo and Mara de Anda Romero



Luis Rodrigo Saldaña and Perla LaBarthe









## Enhanced Collections

Thanks to the *Frida* exhibition, we added **900 new plants** to our collections as we sought to display the flora featured in her paintings, included in her garden at *La Casa Azul*, and important to her culture.

## Frida After 5

The exhibition inspired a once-a-month evening *fiesta* with Frida-inspired cocktails, dancing, music, and more. Special performances included excerpts from the Opera Naples production of the opera *Frida*, featuring renowned Colombian-American soprano Catalina Cuervo. The events proved so popular that we've launched Friday After 5 programs for 2024.





# MEXICO

## A CELEBRATION OF

# PLANTS & CULTURE

### Additional Mexican-Themed Exhibitions

*Mexico: A Celebration of Plants & Culture* carried all the way through the spring with a number of alluring exhibitions:

#### *La Calavera Catrina*

This exhibition, organized by Denver Botanic Gardens, opened in November 2022 and extended through spring 2023, treating guests to the towering *Catrina* sculptures in the Scott Florida Garden. *La Catrina* is an elaborate, ornately dressed female skeleton associated with *Día de los Muertos*. This past fall, sculptor **Ricardo Soltero** created four new figures for the Garden's permanent collection to be showcased during our now-annual *Día de los Muertos* Celebration.

#### *ORIGINS: Patricia Cavazos*

Orlando-based artist **Patricia Cavazos** hails from Coyoacán, the same Mexico City borough where Kahlo resided. Her richly detailed textile art evokes indigenous mythology, celebrates nature, and bursts with the color and vibrancy of her homeland.

#### *Mexico as Muse by Isabelle de Borchgrave*

Belgian artist **Isabelle de Borchgrave** is renowned for her stunningly intricate paper sculptures. Inspired by a trip to Mexico and Frida Kahlo's home, *La Casa Azul*, de Borchgrave's works reinterpret iconic symbols and Mexican traditions in her distinct style. The exhibition was presented in partnership with the **Naples Art Institute**.



La Calavera Catrina



Patricia Cavazos



Mexico as Muse



# Learning in the Garden

Did you know that our Garden educators are certified interpretive guides, write our organization's comprehensive curriculum, create W.O.N.D.E.R. Activity Packs — complete with original art — and, last year, tackled **9,800** questions on text chat alone? That's a feature that allows guests to submit questions during their visits and get answers in real time. The Garden is our classroom, and our teachers deserve an A+.



Plants and Climate Change Education (PLACCE)

## New in 2023

A group of middle school students from Immokalee have sloshed through a swamp, trekked into a cypress forest, enjoyed a sunflower festival, toured a college, worked on their school garden, and taken a behind-the-scenes look at how our Garden operates.

They are participants in the inaugural **Plants and Climate Change Education (PLACCE)** program. Naples Botanical Garden is one of six selected for this pilot project, in collaboration with the U.S. Botanic Garden. Each garden devised its own program and target audience. At this writing, we're midway through the academic year; check out next year's annual report or the summer issue of *Cultivate*, our Member magazine, to learn more about its outcomes.

We welcomed middle and high school **Green Clubs** for the first time. These eco-minded students learn about conservation and careers in natural resources. They study native plants and habitats and build skills in scientific observation and journaling. We're impressed by their commitment to the planet and glad to help them in their quest for its protection.

## Daily Offerings

### W.O.N.D.E.R.

W.O.N.D.E.R. continues to be, well, wonderful. This family-friendly program served **2,230 people** during drop-in sessions encouraging them to Walk, Observe, Navigate, Draw, Explore, and Read. Another **13,000+ guests** used free W.O.N.D.E.R. Activity Packs to enhance their Garden adventures.

### Dig Deeper

Dig Deeper invites adult visitors to delve into nature's inner workings, like the interplay between plant and animal species, how peppers get their heat, and the mechanisms of flower fragrance. Nearly **5,000 guests** stopped by our Dig Deeper cart to learn more about these and other botanical curiosities.

## Garden Tours

Our plants have stories to tell! Our carefully curated tours bring the collections to life. Did you know our cycads are descendants of plants from prehistoric times? Or that vanilla comes from a tropical orchid? In 2023, approximately **12,000 people** learned facts like these through educator-led tours and some **24,000** did so by accessing self-guided audio tours on their cellphones.



## Special Programming

### School Field Trips

We saw more **Budding Botanists** than we have since COVID-19 halted school excursions. Precisely **1,237 students** — about 36% of Collier County's fourth-grade population — visited the Garden. That's just one field trip offering. In all, we saw about **3,400 students** in grades PreK – 12.

### Let's Grow!

Let's Grow! is a program focused on helping school and community garden leaders sustain their gardens. We were delighted to see record attendance at our fall workshop, "Growing Minds: Making Learning Fun in the Garden," with **53 attendees** from **29 schools and other organizations** in Collier and Lee counties, along with an individual from Sarasota.

### Sensory-Friendly Saturdays

On select Saturday afternoons, we minimize noise and distractions so that people with sensory sensitivities and their families can enjoy the benefits of nature. We offer extended hours and free admission to attendees of this much-loved program.

### Nature Journaling: Botany Through Art

Apparently, word of this eight-week, online introductory art class for older adults has spread! Our most far-flung student hailed from Uruguay. Garden educators lead sessions in English and Spanish. Those who live in Southwest Florida organize meet-ups to practice skills and form friendships.

### Meet Me in the Garden

A dementia diagnosis can isolate families. The Garden seeks to bring them together in a comforting, calming environment. Meet Me in the Garden is a nature-based therapeutic program for those with dementia and their care partners, developed in tandem with the Alzheimer's Support Network in Naples. We are pleased to have offered **215 people** a chance for respite and camaraderie in 2023.





# Sharing Expertise

Plants are meant to be shared. So is knowledge about their care and conservation. Our staff offered their expertise and support to endeavors at home and around the world.



Brian Galligan, Vice President of Horticulture, and the Mauritius Wildlife Foundation team work to save one of five historic, endangered trees.

## Rodrigues Island Tree Conservation

Rodrigues is a speck of an island hundreds of miles off the African coast. Vice President of Horticulture **Brian Galligan** traveled to this remote place to help the Mauritius Wildlife Foundation prepare to move **five historic, endangered trees** that are in the way of a runway expansion project. (Outside organizations funded this effort.) Garden staff intend to return in 2024 and oversee the trees' relocation to a nearby preserve. We are also working with other gardens around the world to conserve these species through tissue culture.

## Chelsea Flower Show

Florida is home to **more than 100 native orchid** species, most of them endangered. The Garden, along with several other institutions, showcased these elusive plants at the world-renowned Chelsea Flower Show in London. The display setup, largely executed by the Garden's Director of Collections **Nick Ewy**, gave guests a taste of South Florida's swamps where many of these flowers — including the ghost orchid (*Dendrophylax lindenii*) — fight for survival amid changing climate conditions, shifting water levels, poaching pressure, and the perpetual stress of new development. Ewy will again bring his expertise to the 2024 show.



Nick Ewy, Director of Collections, affixes an orchid to a branch for the Chelsea Flower Show display. Brian Galligan steadies the ladder.

## Beautifying Our Community

Our Horticulture Team alone has donated the equivalent of **240+ hours** of expertise consulting on projects, most of them right here in Southwest Florida. The initiatives include: helping Marco Island define its 10,000 Trees project; improving public golf courses in the City of Fort Myers; and advising the Community Redevelopment Agencies in Immokalee and the Bayshore Gateway Triangle region of Naples. Additionally, our team conducted an Earth Day planting in Immokalee, donating staff time and plants.





*Encyclia tampensis*

## Searching for Rare Orchids and Epiphytes

Director of Collections **Nick Ewy** is among a group of land managers and plant experts combing Collier County's wilderness for rare and endangered native orchids and epiphytes (plants that grow on trees and don't require soil). They intend to monitor the plants over time and glean insights about how they and their ecosystems are faring. They have collected seeds from the state-endangered false water spider orchid (*Habenaria distans*), and last year Ewy succeeded in growing several specimens in his lab.

## Caribbean and Central American Botanic Garden Network

The Garden serves as coordinator for this growing group of botanical garden professionals. The Network's milestones include finalizing a sweeping strategy for saving the region's plants, launching regular webinars on conservation practices, and achieving nearly \$167,000 in funding from the Leon Levy Foundation. The money will support professional development scholarships, Network development, technical educational materials, translation services, and projects at institutions throughout the Caribbean and Central America.

## Our First Garden Fellow

We were honored to host **Natacha Beaussejour** of Jardin Botanique des Cayes in Haiti, a longtime partner. She spent six weeks studying marketing and development strategies with our administrators while also helping connect us with our local Haitian community, one of the largest in the United States. Beaussejour directs marketing, development, and international relations at her garden.



Natacha Beaussejour

We also welcomed **Thrity (3T) Vakil**, Director of the Tropic Ventures Sustainable Forestry & Rainforest Enrichment Project, another important regional ally. She spent a week studying seed propagation techniques. She, Vice President of Conservation **Chad Washburn**, and **William Cinea**, founder of the Jardin Botanique des Cayes, presented a panel discussion at the 32nd Annual **Southwest Florida Water Resources Conference** at Florida Gulf Coast University.





Jessica DeYoung, Conservation Horticulture Manager



Isabel Soto, Horticulture Project Manager



Eric Foht, Natural Resources Director

## Professional Appearances & Recognitions

- President & CEO **Donna McGinnis** joined the international advisory committee of **Botanic Gardens Conservation International**. She also serves as Vice President of the **American Public Gardens Association** Board of Directors.
- Conservation Horticulture Manager **Jessica DeYoung** shared tips on how to use data to drive ecosystem conservation decisions in an online chat hosted by collections management company **IrisBG**.
- Vice President of Conservation **Chad Washburn**, Vice President of Education & Interpretation **Britt Patterson-Weber**, and Conservation Associate **Dan Agis** co-led a workshop in Cuba hosted in collaboration with **Planta! – Plantlife Conservation Society and the Leon Levy Native Plant Preserve**. The three facilitated workshops on conservation education, conservation horticulture, seed collection techniques, and on the newly finalized Caribbean Strategy for Plant Conservation.
- Associate Horticulture Director **Elizabeth Beans**, Horticulture Project Manager **Isabel Soto**, and **Washburn** discussed strategies for native plant management and offered insights about native plants and climate change at the **Florida Association of Native Nurseries** conference, held at the Garden.
- **Washburn** was among the panelists at ***The Urgency of Now*** documentary premiere at the Sugden Theatre in Naples.
- **Twenty-two** Garden staff shared expertise in their respective disciplines at the **American Public Gardens Association** annual conference in Dallas-Fort Worth. Among the speakers were Director of Visitor Services **Katy Havlik** and Visitor Services Manager **Darian Lee**, elevating the critical — but rarely discussed — role of ticketing staff, or “frontline ambassadors.”
- The **South Florida Interagency Fire Management Council** invited Natural Resources Director **Eric Foht** to share his experience and recommendations for executing a prescribed fire in an urban setting. Foht also gave a keynote address to the **Florida Invasive Species Council** annual symposium, discussing coastal resiliency.
- Director of Collections **Nick Ewy** gave a talk on palms at the **Lee County Extension Office** and lectured on orchids for **Orchid Society** chapters in Deerfield Beach, Flamingo Gardens, and Fort Lauderdale. He was also featured at a **Vanilla Symposium** at the Collier County Extension Office.
- A special congratulations to Director of Exhibitions & Special Programs **Erin Wolfe Bell**, honored as Nonprofit Employee of the Year by the **Cape Coral Community Foundation**, which recognizes leaders throughout Southwest Florida in its annual ENPY (Excellence in Nonprofit Performance Yearly) Awards. This same foundation named **McGinnis** one of the region’s Top 30 Nonprofit Executives of 2023.
- The **East Naples Civic & Commerce Association** named Naples Botanical Garden its 2023 Business of the Year.



# Community Access

The Garden's community roots run deep, and we're always looking for ways to make our campus and its wonders accessible to the community.



## Garden for All

Our Garden for All program has two components. The first is a Member program for working families whose incomes don't allow for cultural enrichment and who are involved with partnering human service organizations. In 2023, we welcomed **64 new family households** for a total of **589**. We recorded approximately **570 Member visits**, far exceeding the prior year's usage rates. The second component is a Community Access offering for essential workers, such as teachers, first responders, and hospitality professionals. We saw **3,000 Community Access visits**, and we are proud to give back to those who give so much!

## Discount Programs

We take care of our community with special discounts for residents in Collier, Lee, and Charlotte counties.

- Summer Resident Discount: **8,500 visits**
- Library Cardholders Week: **1,700 visits**

## Holiday Admissions

More than **1,600 guests** visited the Garden for free on Haitian Flag Day, Juneteenth, and July 4, our complimentary admission days in 2023. Another **500-plus** moms, dads, active and retired military personnel received complimentary admission on select holidays throughout the year.







## Thank You, Volunteers!

Many hands make light work! In 2023, we strengthened our Community Volunteer Program, inviting schools, businesses, and other organizations to tackle projects across our campus.

These **135 community volunteers** offered **500 hours'** worth of service. Their accomplishments included:

- Mulching and beautifying garden beds
- Clearing plants and horticultural debris from a fire break
- Weeding potted plants in the native nursery
- Assembling W.O.N.D.E.R. Activity Packs
- Serving as "wayfinders" during our Día de los Muertos Celebration

Individual volunteers continue to be instrumental to the Garden. These regulars provided **11,205 hours'** worth of service, assisting with the day-to-day upkeep of our gardens, along with many other essential tasks.





# Thank You to our Leaders!

Plants and people thrive at Naples Botanical Garden. That's because the organization is nourished by the generosity, support, expertise, and guidance of the Board of Directors and Sustaining Leadership Council. These individuals are the backbone of the organization, working to continually enhance the Garden. As you cheer the successes outlined in this annual report, be certain to applaud the supporters who made them happen.

## 2023 Board of Directors

Kathleen Kapnick, Chair  
Cathy Funderburg, Vice Chair  
Deborah Russell, Treasurer  
Kermit Sutton, Secretary  
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Marilyn Bartter  
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John Buehler  
Ronald Ciesla  
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Dr. Philip Leone  
Jody Lippes  
Gloria "Pixie" Messey  
Al Stashis, Jr.  
Shelly Stayer  
Mary Stone  
Jennifer Sullivan  
Kenneth Sumner  
Robert Van Dore  
Jaime Weisinger

Donna McGinnis, President & CEO  
Harvey E. Kapnick, Jr., Director in Memoriam



*Guzmania lingulata*

## 2023 Sustaining Leadership Council

### Platinum

Cortney L. Beebe  
Jane Purdy Berger  
Mary Ann E. Bindley  
Joanne Brown  
Eleanor B. Chabreja  
Joan E. Clifford  
Parker J. Collier  
Grace Evenstad  
Donna S. Hall  
Cordia Harrington  
Julia S. Heidt  
Amy M. Heuerman  
Barbara J. Hills  
Jerrilyn M. Hoffmann  
Manisha D. Kapani  
Kathleen Kapnick

Ann Khan  
Linda Koehn  
Jody B. Lippes  
Joan T. Loos  
Gloria P. Messey  
Barbara L. Morrison  
Beverly G. Neal  
Donna D. Nelson  
Patrice H. Schoonmaker  
F. Annette Scott  
Karen M. Scott  
Lynne Shotwell  
Mary S. Smith  
Vicky C. Smith  
Shelly Stayer  
Susan C. Stielow  
Jenny W. Sutton

Carol A. Walter  
Shirley Z. Welsh  
Nancy G. White  
Kathryn E. Woods

### Gold

Leslie K. S. Fogg  
Nancy H. Hamill  
Melissa Keiswetter  
Paula J. Malone  
Linda Orlans  
Katherine R. Pallas  
Kathleen C. Rooney  
Wynnell Schrenk\*  
Connie Vandenberg  
Linda G. White

\*deceased





## Garden Visionaries

Our highest level of recognition, Garden Visionaries, honors those who have forged the Garden into what it is today. Because of these individuals, we can embrace our role as a world-class showcase for tropical horticulture, as a cornerstone of regional plant conservation, and as a place where plants and people thrive together.

These generous Garden patrons offered gift commitments between January 1, 2023 and December 31, 2023.

### \$500,000 and above

Mary Ann and Bill Bindley  
Lorraine Carlson\*  
Kathleen and Scott Kapnick  
Linda and Tom Koehn  
Mr. and Mrs. David Byron Smith  
Shelly and Ralph Stayer  
Jenny and Kermit Sutton

### \$250,000 - \$499,999

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Foundation  
Mr. and Mrs. Robert W. Anthony  
Cortney and Kevin Beebe  
Mr. and Mrs. Nicholas D. Chabreja  
Collier Community Foundation  
Nina\* and Stephen Iser  
Family Foundation  
Peggy and Dan LeKander  
The Pastore Family

### \$100,000 - \$249,999

Collier County Tourist  
Development Council  
Gulfshore Life  
Jerrilyn and David Hoffmann  
Kendel Kennedy  
Ann and Shahid Khan  
Marcia\* and L. Bates\* Lea  
Irma and Thomas Leonard  
Dr. Cheryl L. and Dr. Philip G. Leone  
Deb and Vince Maffeo  
The Martin Foundation  
Mr. and Mrs. Robert J. Messey  
M.G. and Donna Nelson  
Juliet C. Sproul  
State of Florida, Department of State,  
Division of Arts and Culture,  
the Florida Council on Arts and  
Culture, and the National Endowment  
for the Arts  
Mr. and Mrs. William C. Stone  
John and Connie Vandenberg

### \$50,000 - \$99,999

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Edward and Judith Bergauer  
Anne Rea and Ken Bigg  
Thomas B. Dunkel and Diane A. Dahl  
Terry and Bob Edwards  
Cathy and Rob Funderburg  
Heidt Family Foundation  
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Mrs. Jody B. Lippes  
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### \$25,000 - \$49,999

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Mr. Harmon Brown  
Liz and Pete Chehayl  
Joan and Robert Clifford  
Brynne & Bob Coletti  
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John R.\* & Donna S. Hall  
Cordia and Tom Harrington  
Amy and Paul Heuerman  
Roy and Manisha Kapani  
William and Sharon Kiehl  
Mary Ruth and Gil Leavitt

Joan Loos  
Simone and Scott Lutgert  
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Thomas\* and Carol Matyniak  
Mr. Bruce H. McEver  
Mrs. Kathleen D. Mezzalingua  
Marti Morfitt and Pat Weber  
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Ms. Kimberly J. Mueller  
Mr. and Mrs. John Quinn  
Mr. and Mrs.\* William Raveis  
The Honorable and  
Mrs. Francis Rooney  
Senator and Mrs. Rick Scott  
Karen and Robert Scott  
Lynne and Chip Shotwell  
Dyan and John Smith  
Mr. and Mrs. Stephen Byron Smith  
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Anne Drackett Thomas  
Helen and Richard Thomas  
Catherine Kidder Ware  
Waterside Shops  
Shirley and Peter Welsh  
Mrs. Nancy G. White  
William Raveis Real Estate  
Kathy and Rodney Woods



## Generosity Makes Gardens Grow

Like plants in need of regular watering, our Garden depends on ongoing financial support to carry out its mission. Memberships, gifts to the annual fund, grants, sponsorships, and other contributions ensure we serve as a regional leader in plant conservation, environmental education, and horticultural excellence. Thank you to our Royal Palm Society Members, whose annual contributions of \$1,500 or more in 2023 continue to enhance our efforts for years to come.

## Royal Palm Society & Special Friends

Anonymous (17)

2nd Chance Foundation

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Mr. Paul R. Abbey

Mr. and Mrs. Hyman Ackerman

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Constance Alsbrook

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 Mr. and Mrs. Bob Krupka  
 Mr. and Mrs. John A. Kuhne

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Ms. Anne Schuchman  
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Mrs. Susan Schumann-Skehan and  
Mr. Gary Skehan  
Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Schweller

\*deceased





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