



2025 Annual Report



From our Leadership



As I reflect on 2025, one thought keeps circling my mind: Wow, we've really grown into our own.

Our horticulturists, who devoted the prior year to moving and settling into the Evenstad Horticulture Campus, spent 2025 mastering and optimizing its technology. Oh, how our plants love the consistency of its irrigation, humidity, and air circulation controls!

We unveiled the Center for Nature-Based Solutions, which is not a physical place, but a deepening of our conservation, restoration, and climate-adaptation efforts. We're thrilled to see the first major undertaking under its banner, Collier County's beach dune restoration, come to fruition.

Even our approach to exhibitions has shifted from looking outward for touring shows to tapping our in-house talent. We created our first large-scale exhibit, *Frame & Flora*, in 2025. The concept, preparation, and execution spanned our entire organization. I feel lucky to have led such a creative team.

Likewise, we leaned on the expertise of many divisions to create Nature

Play, a project that signals an important part of our evolution. We transformed three areas of the Garden into spaces designed for romping, exploring, climbing, and inventing—perfect for enticing children to put down their screens and turn on their imaginations. We're grateful for the support of *Hats in the Garden* patrons who embraced this special endeavor as the event's Fund-A-Need.

Now, with this team so securely in place and advancing our mission in every way possible, I've made the difficult decision to leave Naples and pursue my next endeavor, as President & CEO of Denver Botanic Gardens. I will cherish the nine years I spent in this Garden and this community. I am forever grateful for all you've done—from seeing us through catastrophic storms to celebrating major accomplishments. With your support, I know Naples Botanical Garden will continue to thrive.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large 'D' and 'M' intertwined.

Donna McGinnis
President & CEO





In the 10 years I have been involved with the Garden, so much has happened! We prevailed over some monumental challenges, such

as hurricanes and the pandemic, while equally celebrating accomplishments, namely the opening of the Evenstad Horticulture Campus. Dare I say it? My first year as Board Chair went mostly to plan, and perhaps we're entering a disaster-free respite.

We celebrated a terrific season with our beloved annual festivals and flower shows. Our *Frame & Flora* exhibition invited visitors to pause and consider plants as art. Through it, guests learned how plants work together and how to achieve similar results in their own spaces.

Thank you to my fellow Sustaining Leadership Council member, Joan Clifford, who chaired the phenomenal 2025 *Hats in the Garden*. What a day! The event raised over \$4.5 million in support of the Garden's mission. The Nature Play test sites supported by the event's Fund-A-Need offer visitors of all ages the chance to immerse themselves in a screen-free world of imagination.

Thank you to the many generous people who make the Garden a reality. You can read many of their names later in this publication. You all make our mission possible.

The Garden never stops. It is always changing, always growing. That's true of both our plants and our people. While we are sad to see Donna McGinnis depart for Denver Botanic Gardens, we know that our Garden will continue to flourish with its dedicated team and the leadership to come. Stay tuned for new adventures ahead.

Cathy Funderburg

Chair, Board of Directors





Growing Goes High-Tech

The Garden's Horticulture Team, after moving tens of thousands of plants into the Evenstad Horticulture Campus, dedicated 2025 to learning its technological features and maximizing its capabilities. As Greenhouse & Nursery Lead **Luann Gallagher** (at far right) puts it, the center is "a giant machine," full of innovations that help our team grow the best possible plants. Like engineers, the staff spent the year fine-tuning it, learning operations such as:

- How to control irrigation and fertilization systems by cellphone and computer.
- How to customize each greenhouse zone and apply just the right amount of water and nutrients.
- How to automate functions, such as irrigation.
- How to adjust temperature and light.

Over the course of the year, we started to reap the benefits of the Horticulture Campus. Here are just a few:

- We're growing "ultra-tropical" seedlings under carefully controlled conditions. By giving these heat-loving plants a good head start in the greenhouses, they fare better once planted in the display gardens.
- More than half of the **40,000 annuals** we used throughout the year were grown on-site. We'll produce even more of our own in 2026.
- Our team managed **6,700 propagation cuttings** in 2025.
- We ordered more than **1,600 orchids**, primarily *Phalaenopsis*, for display. Some **80%** of orchids are now being reused, as we can better tend the plants and prompt them to rebloom.
- We grew and planted **250 plants** of various Southwest Florida-appropriate specimens along a new fence bordering the Horticulture Campus. It is visible by the Lake Trail and meant as a model for how to plant a buffer in a way that is biodiverse, low-maintenance, eco-friendly, and aesthetically interesting.





Staff Accomplishments

- **Fernando Pereira** (pictured above) became a certified arborist, the first such specialist on staff.
- **Pereira**, Greenhouse & Nursery Lead **Luann Gallagher**, Nursery Operations Manager **Matthew Linder**, Lead Gardener **Bash Avila**, and Horticulture Maintenance Supervisor **Lindsay McCoy** earned their plant health certifications. **Gallagher** also completed coursework in greenhouse, nutrient, climate, and disease management through the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Science (UF/IFAS).
- **Avila**, Horticulture Executive Administrative Assistant **Kristin Hood**, Nursery Gardener 2 **Winston Hughes**, and Nursery Specialist **Emily Rodriguez** earned “certified horticulture professional” status with the Florida Nursery, Growers, and Landscape Association. **Hood** also became a certified interpretive guide through the National Association for Interpretation.

Even advanced greenhouse technology can’t replace the very human art of growing plants. We added specialists, filled open positions, and supported existing staff in their professional development. The team now includes:

- Two nursery gardeners to manage the sun and shade nurseries.
- A nursery specialist to oversee the conservation collections.
- A plant health lead.
- A horticulture special collections associate who manages the orchid collection.
- A lab & nursery propagation associate, who manages the propagation house and tracks thousands of propagation cuttings, plugs, seedlings, and small plants.
- A plant records assistant who helped track the **14,000 entries** made to our database in 2025.

House Guests

Now fully moved into our horticultural home, we’ve been playing host to gardens and plant experts from near and far who want a glimpse into our operations and a chance to talk shop with fellow “plant nerds.” Our guest list in 2025 included:

- England’s Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew
- United States Botanic Garden
- City of Fort Myers
- Longwood Gardens, Pennsylvania
- Bahamas National Trust
- Franklin Park Conservatory Botanical Gardens, Ohio
- University of South Florida Botanical Garden
- Illinois College (students of orchid expert Larry Zettler)
- Representatives of the Chelsea Flower Show science group
- Vizcaya Museum & Gardens, Miami
- UF/IFAS Master Gardeners (more than 100 toured the Horticulture Campus to culminate their workshop series)
- The director of Species360, a database for managing zoological and botanical data.



Managed with Care

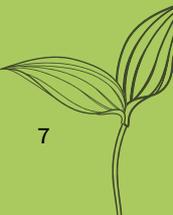
We take as much pride in the maintenance of our buildings and on-the-ground structures as we do our plants. Behind the scenes, our Operations Team ...

- Tracked and completed more than **5,140 maintenance tasks**. In its busiest month, September 2025, the team managed **more than 400 projects**, designed to prepare the Garden for the seasonal influx of visitors, events, and festivals.
- Conducted a property-wide condition assessment, documenting more than **420 assets**, including building components, fence lines, large equipment, and greenhouse infrastructure.

Meanwhile, the Safety & Security division within that team made significant strides in enhancing training initiatives for the entire staff. Employees earned certifications and underwent trainings in an array of topics, including CPR, first aid, equipment operations, and fire safety and chemical management. Their efforts make for a safer Garden experience—for guests and staff alike!



Congratulations to **Gavin Cooke**, who joined the Garden in 2011 as a part-time maintenance worker while going to college and is now the Vice President of Facility Operations!



A “Facelift” for Florida

Over the summer, Garden horticulturists tore out the leggy plants around the Karen and Robert Scott Florida Garden stream and reimagined the area as a kaleidoscope of color, texture—and unfettered water views.

Along the stream, and in a few other strategic spots, they planted approximately **5,000 grasses, wildflowers, and annuals**—mostly Florida native plants—along with **15 buccaneer palms (*Pseudophoenix sargentii*)** that will frame the space. To complete the picture, the team added **15 boulders** in and around the planted beds, creating a contrasting mix of hardscape and foliage.

We never like to say goodbye to botanical favorites, but in that garden, we had to remove the triple-trunked palm tree near the large chickee as it had acquired a fungal infection. But we replaced it with what is sure to become another favorite, a massive *Dioon spinulosum* cycad.





Chip Jones works with Curator of Records Sandra Rigotti-Santos and Director of Collections Nick Ewy.

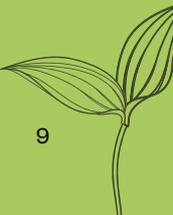
Ancient Plants, Contemporary Knowledge

Cycads are the dinosaurs of the plant world, dating back some 300 million years. Our robust collection includes some **560 specimens**, from places like Mexico and Africa. They are among the most imperiled plants on the planet, their populations decimated by habitat loss and poaching. By growing these plants in botanical gardens, we can keep them from going the way of the dinosaur! With that responsibility in mind, we engaged **Chip Jones**, a cycad expert from Moore Haven, Florida, to help us assess, manage, and properly identify these rare plants.

Jones examined **400 cycads** and determined the species and genus of **88** unidentified ones. He also corrected the names of **26**. He reviewed gaps in the collection and advised us on the most valuable species to retain, so that we can amass the most comprehensive collection of cycads possible.

We're similarly grateful to **John Trager**, who manages the desert plant collection at The Huntington Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Gardens in California. During a visit to Naples, he offered recommendations on the care of our cacti and succulent collections and identified numerous unspecified species.

Cycads, of course, aren't the only rare plants we harbor in our collection. In 2025, we added about **60 types** of threatened plants, which we'll protect in greenhouses or our carefully tended display gardens.







Obsessed with Orchids

Director of Collections **Nick Ewy** and fellow orchid experts spent many days in 2025—including an intense, three-day excursion—deep in the region’s swamps, wading through water, dodging branches, and tromping through muck, their eyes scanning the landscape for native orchids affixed to trees.

They recorded hundreds of them, including our most elusive—the **ghost orchid** (*Dendrophylax lindenii*), **ribbon orchid** (*Campylocentrum pachyrrhizum*), and **Florida star orchid** (*Epidendrum floridense*). Of the latter, they found dozens more than previously believed to exist. The information helps them understand how and where orchids grow, the health and reproductive success of orchid populations, and other data points that will aid orchid conservation efforts.



Back at the Garden, Ewy and John Finer, a courtesy faculty member at Florida Gulf Coast University and professor emeritus at The Ohio State University, work to grow native orchids from seeds. In 2025, the two specialists began working with ghost orchids seeds collected by one of our conservation partners (with legal authorization) from a habitat that is quickly degrading. Ewy and Finer are working to propagate the notoriously hard-to-grow orchids. Eventually, Ewy will outplant them in the Garden’s Preserve and monitor how they fare.

Cheers to Our Orchid Experts

Congratulations to Director of Collections **Nick Ewy** and **Liz Chehayl** (pictured at right), the now-retired Brian Holley Curator of Collections, who were part of an international team showcasing native orchids from various regions at the Chelsea Flower Show in London. The display won a Gold Medal. The duo, along with Horticulture Executive Administrative Assistant **Kristin Hood** (above, with Ewy), also won the American Orchid Society Award and Gold Ribbon for their native Florida orchid display at the Naples Orchid Society’s Orchid Show in February 2025!





How Does our Garden Grow?

With a constant eye out for spectacular new acquisitions! In 2025, we accessioned **4,300 new plants** into the collection, bringing the total to around **50,000**. Some notable newcomers:

- **88 types of palms** brand new to our collection, including:
 - *Bentinckia condapanna*, an endangered species found only in India's evergreen forests.
 - *Loxococcus rupicola*, listed as "critically endangered" and found only in Sri Lanka.
 - *Pritchardia perlmanii*, a critically endangered palm found only on the Hawaiian island of Kauai.
- **147 new types of tropical fruits**—because why stop at citrus?
- **13 first-of-their-kind waterlily hybrids**. These plants were contenders in the International Waterlily & Water Gardening Society's New Waterlily Competition. The Garden was a co-host, with Curator of Special Collections **Matthew Herrman** growing, tending, and documenting the plants on behalf of judges. Competitors donated their plants to our collection.



New Plantings

We planted **1,500 species** from the formal collection for guests to enjoy during their Garden visits. These include:

- **Four large carpoxyton palms** (*Carpoxyton macrospermum*). You can find them in the Marcia and L. Bates Lea Asian Garden and the South Grove—and you should indeed seek them out. These critically endangered palms are found only on the island of Vanuatu in the South Pacific.
- ***Simarouba tulae***, a flowering shrub found only in Puerto Rico and a relative of the paradise tree (*Simarouba glauca*), native to Florida. We're trialing it in the Kapinick Caribbean Garden and Karen and Robert Scott Florida Garden to see how it fares in our region's growing conditions.
- Numerous new tropical fruit trees were added to the Lea Asian Garden. They include: **red snakefruit** (*Salacca affinis*), **true cinnamon** (*Cinnamomum verum*), and **bilimbi** (*Averrhoa bilimbi*), a starfruit relative.



Red snakefruit (*Salacca affinis*)



Bilimbi (*Averrhoa bilimbi*)

Photo: Roqui Bello

Plant Labels

It sounds like a small detail, but if you're curious to learn what plants you're looking at, then clear, easy-to-read, long-lasting plant labels are a big deal! We switched to a stainless steel variety less likely to corrode than the galvanized one we currently use. Remember: Look near the bases of trees and shrubs to find staked tags identifying plants from our collection.



Sharing our Knowledge— and our Plants!

Our plant experts “sowed” inspiration across the country, helping others learn to grow, tend, and appreciate plants of the tropics.



Lauritzen Gardens

Omaha, Nebraska

When leaders of this 100-acre botanical garden in the heart of Nebraska’s biggest city decided to re-imagine their 17,500-square-foot Marjorie K. Daugherty Conservatory, they turned to Naples Botanical Garden. Our team helped them create a tropical oasis under glass, transporting some of our most beloved species 1,600 miles north. Lauritzen’s favorite? We’re told it’s the silk floss tree, which the staff nicknamed “Bowser” for the spiky Super Mario World character.

Magnolia Plantation and Gardens

Charleston, South Carolina

A crew from this historic garden visited Naples for a week to learn about plant record-keeping, land management, and conservation best practices.

Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden

Richmond, Virginia

We packed a U-Haul with nearly 220 plants, to help this 82-acre garden fulfill its ambitious plan to double the size of its conservatory, part of a \$31 million expansion project.

Edison and Ford Winter Estates

Fort Myers, Florida

We donated 162 plants to this historic property along the Caloosahatchee River, where Thomas Edison and Henry Ford once spent their winters.

Peace River Botanical & Sculpture Gardens

Punta Gorda, Florida

We offered trees and plants to this 30-acre property, a fusion of art and nature, as it continues to grow and expand.

Flamingo Garden

Davie, Florida

Nearly a century old, this botanical garden and wildlife sanctuary got its start as a citrus grove. We’re delighted to offer some of our plants and trees to the organization, home to the state’s largest collection of “champion trees,” which the Florida Forest Service has determined to be the largest of their species.

Moorings Park

Naples, Florida

This continuing care community turned to the Garden for advice as it designed the landscape of its newest facility, GardenView at Moorings Park.



Collier County

We worked with several government agencies to enhance the natural beauty of Collier County, a point of pride for all of us lucky enough to call this region home.

- **Naples Airport Authority:** We donated approximately 30 trees to replace trees along the airport’s buffer that were felled by hurricanes and storm surge. We selected species that are better adapted to our climate and conditions and anticipate they will better withstand future storms.
- **Collier County Sheriff’s Office:** We helped devise an all-natural noise abatement strategy: a buffer of Walter’s viburnum (*Viburnum obovatum*), a native Florida evergreen shrub.
- **Collier County Landscape Operations:** Together with the county, we’re trialing about 50 Garden-grown trees in urban settings to see how our plants perform.

The results will inform our growing practices and may help shape the county's landscaping palette and policies.

- **Bayshore Gateway Triangle Community Redevelopment Advisory Board:** The CRA is creating a new, 17-acre pathway connecting Bayshore Drive to Sugden Park. Excited to be part of this neighborhood enhancement, we identified invasive plant species to remove from the site, advised on plant selections, and provided hundreds of trees, shrubs, grasses, and other plant types for the property, which will open to the community in early 2026.



The Scientific Side of Plant Sharing

Botanical gardens and related institutions share plant material all over the world to advance plant studies. In 2025, we happily contributed to all sorts of research projects.

- **Hope College in Michigan** is investigating evolutionary relationships among species in the *Asimina* genus, part of the custard apple family. We sent samples of netted pawpaw (*Asimina reticulata*) from our Preserve.
- Our **netted pawpaw** is part of numerous other studies into crop wild relatives, the “cousins” of domesticated food plants. It's a relative to the edible pawpaw (*Asimina triloba*), native to temperate regions of the United States. We've shared plants with a number of gardens across the country for conservation and research.
- The **National Herbarium of Rwanda** and **University of Florida** are researching *Nymphaea thermarum*, the world's smallest waterlily, found only in the east-central African nation. The plant was believed to be extinct in the wild until a population was discovered two years ago. Researchers don't want to tamper with this delicate remnant population, so they've asked botanical gardens to share genetic material from their collections.
- The **Chicago Botanic Garden** is studying the evolution and genetic diversity of plant collections in botanical gardens, including our hybrid angel's trumpet, *Brugmansia x candida*.
- **Harvard University's Arnold Arboretum** is conducting chemical analyses of leaf materials, including that of the paradise tree (*Simarouba glauca*), native to Florida, South America, and the Caribbean.
- A graduate student at **Northwestern University** and the **Chicago Botanic**

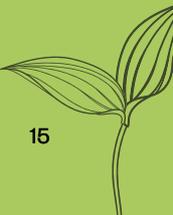
Garden is studying East African *Encephalartos* cycads as part of an effort to document the genetics of these plants within botanic collections.

- **University of Florida doctoral candidate Adam Herdman** incorporates Florida native orchid seeds from the Garden in his research, which focuses on critically threatened and endangered orchid species.
- A **researcher in Taiwan**, working on genetic sequencing, is sampling a type of cycad, *Cycas taitungensis*, sent from our Garden.



New this Year—Plant Sales!

You might see a little piece of the Garden around town. We held six plant sales in 2025, sending our expertly grown plants out to new homes, where we're certain their new owners will love them just as much as we do!





Introducing Nature Play!

In 2025, the Garden adopted a mindset of, say, 1955 or '65 or '75 or '85 or any other decade up until the advent of the iPhone, shortly after 2005. That's when childhood, by and large, went indoors and behind screens.

Nature Play beckons kids back out.

The Garden introduced three play spaces filled with fallen logs, climbing rocks, tree stump “stair steppers,” fairy doorways, and basketsful of nature’s playthings (sticks, palm fronds, blossoms, pine cones) that can transform into just about anything.

Nature Play is unstructured, child-directed play that takes place in nature and with nature. Although simple in appearance, these research-backed play areas counter today’s technology-heavy, sedentary lifestyles and encourage tremendous physical, social, and emotional development in children. Through Nature Play, children gain:

- Balance, coordination, and strength
- Fine motor skills
- A willingness to take risks
- Imagination and creative thinking
- Emotional well-being and reduced anxiety
- Social development and collaborative problem-solving
- Family bonding and memory making

A Labor of Love—for the Kids!

- Our team moved a massive felled ficus tree from a holding area to the Ann and Senator Rick Scott Palm Hop, the expansive Nature Play area within the Kapnick Caribbean Garden. Children have turned it into all sorts of things—a truck, a train, a pirate ship, and more!
- To shade that area, we also put up some natural “umbrellas,” six sabal palms (*Sabal palmetto*) and one Florida thatch palm (*Thrinax radiata*) transplanted from elsewhere in the Garden.
- And to cushion the play space, the team layered eight palettes of mulch—that’s **576 bags** of it!

In this pilot year, Garden educators discovered what resonated most with children (found objects like sticks), how apparatus like stumps hold up in tropical environments (hardwoods work best), and who uses the space (grandparents love to bring grandkids). Armed with that information, Garden leaders intend to refine and enhance these spaces. We know that more than **14,400** people visited one, Jungle Hollow, based on a footstep counter installed near that site. Many thanks to *Hats in the Garden* patrons, led by **Joan and Bob Clifford**, for supporting Nature Play efforts. *Hats* patrons will further advance this initiative in 2026.





Today's Garden Learners = Tomorrow's Environmental Leaders

Garden educators interact with thousands of children in formal programming each year, from our field trips and drop-in programming to our off-site climate education project. We hope the experiences will inspire some of them to pursue eventual careers in fields like horticulture, conservation, and environmental sciences. Even more so, we hope to instill in *all* of them an appreciation for nature that will guide them in making earth-conscious decisions their entire lives.

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

Almost **4,000 children** attended our **W.O.N.D.E.R.** (walk, observe, navigate, draw, explore, read) sessions led by Garden educators. In 2025, the program moved from a rotating set-up to a

permanent spot: **Wonder Circle**, one of our new Nature Play spaces, beloved for its shade, hand-crafted furniture, and, yes, proximity to restrooms. Over the summer, when it got too hot for even this tree-cooled spot, educators moved activities indoors. **Nearly a quarter** of all W.O.N.D.E.R. participants came during the summer months.



Kids can W.O.N.D.E.R. on their own, too! Almost **15,300 guests** picked up W.O.N.D.E.R. Activity Packs, created by our educators for families to use in the Garden—or in their backyards!

Field Trips

There's no better way to learn than hands-on experiences. The Garden is proud to offer field trips that show kids the magic of plants firsthand. We welcomed **710 Collier County fourth graders**

to become Budding Botanists for a day. About **2,700 additional students** participated in field trips of various sorts, from "Feathered Friends" to "Wild Florida Explorers."

We debuted a new offering, "**The Natural Inspiration: Art in Nature.**" Inspired by our annual theme, "A Living Canvas," and many requests for an art-themed experience, this new program shows how plants are used as subjects in artists' works or as a physical material in art. Young attendees discover how to make paint from dried butterfly pea flowers (*Clitoria ternatea*). They watch as the pigment magically appears red when mixed with an acidic solution and blue when placed in an alkaline one!

While most of our field trips focus on the horticultural side of the Garden, teens studying travel and tourism at **Naples High School** and **Golden Gate High School** visited to learn about the Garden as a cultural attraction. In a fun twist,



the tourism class at **Golden Gate High** arranged for third, fourth, and fifth graders from **Lavern Gaynor Elementary** to visit the Garden for our “Wild Florida Explorers” field trip.

D.R.A.G.O.N. Squad

Meet the Dragons—Immokalee Community Academy students who are “Dedicated Researchers Adventuring for Greener Outdoors Now.” The program started as a plant-centered climate education pilot project in 2023 and in 2025 reached more people than ever. During the year, participating students:

- Attended **25 field trips** to **18 locations**.
- Harvested **16 pounds of fresh produce** from their school garden.
- Participated in **93 classroom activities and games**, conceived and developed by our staff.

Additionally, during Latino Conservation Week in September, Garden staff were among the **10 local Latino leaders** who spoke about their environment-related jobs to **230 Immokalee Community Academy students**. As part of the week’s activities, the Garden transported **83 students and family members** to Audubon’s Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary.

Let’s Grow!

Speaking of hands-on experiences, schools and other organizations that participate in the Garden’s Let’s Grow! program quite literally learn by getting their hands dirty. The Garden’s longtime school and community gardening support program supplied **4,350 seedlings** and loaned over **160 EarthBoxes®** to organizations in our Let’s Grow! network. Nearly **130 people** representing more than **30 organizations** attended three workshops to advance their gardening skills.

Who Says Learning Is Just for Kids?

No one ages out of this outdoor classroom. In 2025, thousands of adults went home from the Garden a bit wiser to the natural world.

Dig Deeper drop-in programs drew **6,240** guests. We experimented with some new food-related themes in 2025, such as “Oh, Wow, Cacao!” about plants that produce chocolate. Botany + taste testing? Sweet!

What’s an epiphyte? What’s the difference between a palm and a cycad? **Group tour attendees**—almost **6,600**—learned the answers to these and many other botanical curiosities. New in 2025: paid cart





tours, offered from May – October, moved from golf carts to the Garden’s new, air-conditioned tram. This miniature bus proved irresistible (thank you, *Hats in the Garden* patrons for providing its funding), and the cart tours surged in popularity—serving roughly **640 people** in **180 tours**.

The beach is Southwest Florida’s No. 1 attraction (and let’s face it, the No. 1 reason why many of us are here). But the beach is far more than a place to swim and sun; it’s an ecosystem, a wildlife corridor—and our first line of defense against storms. During the Garden’s free, **beach dune education programs**, participants walk area shorelines and discover how these coastal habitats are hard at work while we relax. Over **100 people** joined **7 walks** in 2025. We’re grateful to the **Collier Community Foundation** for supporting this program.

Curious about the birds found within our plants? Volunteer birding guides lead excursions every Tuesday suitable for experts and novices alike. More than **120 birders** have submitted nearly **460 checklists** to eBird, a Cornell University site where birders can log their finds, adding to the millions of data points submitted each year from around the world. The Garden is one of the region’s birding hotspots; in 2025, birders recorded **in excess of 150** on our property.



Nature Journaling

Nature Journaling combines science with art. It provides a chance to learn a new skill with an



opportunity to meet new people. This long-running program topped **260 alumni** in 2025. The Garden hosted nine alumni gatherings, including in-person meet-ups in our natural areas and along local beaches, as well as virtual workshops.

Sixteen alumni contributed works to the ***Nature Journaling Invitational*** exhibition, on display from November 2024 – June 2025. Because our courses are taught virtually, people from around the world can participate. The exhibiting artists included alumni from the United States, Colombia, Cuba, Mexico, and Venezuela.

Collier County teachers learned about fundamentals of Nature Journaling and how those skills can be applied to a new K-6 science curriculum. In a nature journaling workshop led by **Joe Fagnano**, the Garden’s Creative Programs Lead, and **Emily Parlier**, the district’s Science

Sharing our Knowledge

Our D.R.A.G.O.N. Squad curriculum—and the lessons Garden educators learned creating it—were featured at the **11th International Congress on Education in Botanic Gardens**, held in Seoul, South Korea. Vice President of Education & Interpretation **Britt Patterson-Weber**, who delivered two presentations there, also authored an article about student-led plant education in the November 2025 issue of *Roots: Botanic Gardens Conservation International Educational Review*.

Visitor Experience Lead **Juniper Deja** was elected secretary of the Sunny Southeast Region for the **National Association for Interpretation (NAI)**. Deja also taught attendees of the NAI conference in Virginia Beach how to engineer impactful props for interpretive programming—a skill our staff has mastered as they imagine and make most of what you see in our on-site programs.

Interpretation Supervisor **Em Kless** reminded attendees during a virtual conference for the National Association for Interpretation that learning is as much about emotional connection as it is intellectual growth in their session, “This Time with Feeling: Emotion-Centered Programming for Empowerment.”



Coordinator, **27 attendees** learned how the practice can enhance science standards. These call on students to record and reflect on inquiry-based observations, activities, investigations, and experiments in science notebooks. With this training, teachers may ask students to add some botanical sketches to the mix!



Congratulations to **Britt Patterson-Weber!** The Garden’s Vice President of Education & Interpretation was honored with a **Professional Citation Award**, one of the highest accolades of the **American Public Gardens Association**, for her innovative programming at our Garden and her contributions to the industry at large.





Exhibitions 2025: Framing our Most Important Art ... our Plants!

We've demonstrated over the years that we know how to find and book spectacular art exhibitions. But could we create our own in-house spectacle?

Frame & Flora proved that indeed we could!

For this exhibition, we turned the lens inward and directed eyes to our collections. They are, after all, the reason we're here! Mechanic **Scott Dorris**, a certified welder, fabricated 17 lightweight aluminum frames—some as big as 12 feet by 16 feet. Staff then positioned them throughout the Garden (one even hung in a tree), inviting guests to



stop and consider each as a living, changing work of art. For the first time, we included the Preserve in an art exhibition, using the oversized frames and accompanying signage that taught viewers about habitat types, wildlife, and land management.

The exhibition was interactive, inviting guests to share images and impressions with us. One wrote, poignantly, "Creating joyful memories of profoundly beautiful moments fulfills my higher purpose." On a lighter note, we received some delightfully silly poses in front of our trail camera—and **433 scans** of a QR code that linked guests to wildlife photos captured on it.

On the heels of that, we started planning *ChromaFlora*, our staff-imagined, signature exhibition for 2026!

Frame & Flora included:

- The expertise of **31 staff members** from Education & Visitor Experience, Horticulture, Conservation, Operations, and Communications.
- Three 12-by-9-foot frames that looked like magical doorways.
- Kid-sized 4-by-4-foot frames, positioned at kid-friendly eye levels. (We saw lots of adults crouching low to experience those scenes, too!).
- QR codes linking guests to bonus content and more information about our collections, how-to tips, restoration work, and more!
- Some **500 feet** of aluminum welded into frames and painted using **6 gallons** of paint.

We aren't the only ones to find artistic inspiration in the Garden ...

Eternally Curious:

A Journey of Creation & Growth

Tanya Trinkhaus Glass may be among the most prolific—and diverse—of artists. In this special exhibition, she showcased **58 original works** in Kapnick Hall—the most pieces ever hung in that

space. Glass interpreted our plant collection in both hyper realistic and abstract ways, showing her remarkable artistic range and her unabating love for nature. Members were excited for the exhibition—**340** of them attended a Members-Only preview.

Artists in Bloom

Thirty-two area artists used the Garden as a muse and created works in a wide range of media. Some artists zoomed in on single blooms and miniscule details; others panned out, creating sweeping landscapes. The exhibition was produced in collaboration with United Arts Collier.



Plant Poetry: Writer's Circle (New in 2025!)

Some artists express their love for the Garden in images, others in words. Fort Myers poet **Natalie Guerra** and Garden educators have teamed up to create new opportunities for the latter. After a brief educator-led exploration highlighting the Garden's plant collection, participants draw on their newly discovered inspiration and write poetry focused on nature—its beauty, form, and function.



The Way It Looked that Day

Perhaps no one draws more inspiration from the Garden than our in-house Multimedia Coordinator **John Eder**, who, after many years of photographing people and the built environment, trains his lens on the wonders of nature. This exhibition featured a rotating collection of his favorite images, such as the one above, captured in the cultivated gardens and Preserve.



Sharing our Knowledge

Sten Kerwin, the Garden's Curator of Arts & Culture, was named the Arts & Exhibitions Community Chair for the American Public Gardens Association, where she works with botanical garden staff serving in similar roles across North America.





Festivals & Festivities

The Garden is *Where Plants & People Thrive Together*. Our **festivals and special events** focus on the “people” part, creating special moments that, in turn, create community.

Plein Air Fest

Continuing in the long tradition of painting outdoors, area artists set up their easels and replicated the scenes in front of them, to the delight of more than **1,500 onlookers**. Many guests got in on the action, too:

- **50** participated in an Art Naturally program offered in Wonder Circle.
- **80** created a little living canvas.
- **60** joined an instructor-led plein air painting session, and another **30** hung out and watched.

Flower Shows

While the North shivers, our tropical Garden springs to life with a trio of flower shows, annual favorites for our community and seasonal visitors. Combined, these shows drew nearly **17,000 guests!**

- The **Annual Ikebana Exhibition** brings the ancient art of Japanese floral arranging to life with sophisticated, minimalist designs. Held in conjunction with the Naples Chapter of Ikebana International #160, the event also featured demonstrations and live music.
- The Garden burst with color for the **Naples Orchid Society Annual Show & Sale**, teeming with plants for purchase and eye-catching, educational displays, including one by our very own staff that took first place!
- Lights, Camera, Action! The **Naples Flower Show & Garden Market** captured the glamour and allure of Hollywood in floral splendor. Presented with the Naples Garden Club, the event also featured educational talks and the year’s first public plant sale!



Haitian Flag Day

Haitian Flag Day is the celebration of Haiti’s independence from France. Florida is home to the nation’s largest Haitian population, many of whom live in East Naples, near the Garden. For the first time, we welcomed musicians, dancers, and vendors to commemorate the occasion. We marked plants from Haiti throughout the Garden, encouraging people to learn about the island nation’s flora. More than **900 people**



visited, including a Haitian student organization from Florida Gulf Coast University and many local families, delighted to celebrate their heritage and help others learn about their traditions.

Family Wonder Days

May's heat and humidity were no match for the promise of family fun! The weekend festival drew **1,170 visitors** who explored the Garden and visited educator-led activity stations. Especially popular: indoor activity spaces where families cooled off and relaxed while learning about the outdoors.

Tasting the Tropics

If you bought a jackfruit, would you know how to process it? Do you know how to crack a coconut? Or tell the difference between mango varieties? You would if you had been among the **1,450 people** who attended Tasting the Tropics, our annual celebration of tropical fruit!

Waterlily Weekend

We have nearly 2 acres of water gardens, making our Garden one of the premier spots in the nation to see aquatic plants outdoors, year-round. In that spirit, we hosted our annual Waterlily Weekend. Garden educators led waterlily-themed tours and Dig Deeper programs throughout the day, and Curator of Special Collections **Matt Herrman** held special meet-and-greet sessions to tell guests more about caring for these unique plants. The giant *Victoria* waterlilies, whose pads can support the weight of a small child, were a favorite!

The festival included a showcase of visitor photos submitted to the annual Waterlily Weekend Photography Competition, which continues to grow, with over 100 **submissions**.



Día de los Muertos

The Garden's Day of the Dead celebration has become a cherished tradition, drawing **3,680 people**—a record—who enjoyed traditional Mexican dancers, musicians, food vendors, and artisans, many of whom participated for the first time. In keeping with the holiday's tradition of honoring loved ones lost, attendees shared **940 memories** through our Memory Experience, a display of paper butterflies on which they wrote a tribute to a loved one. We'll puree those butterflies, add marigold seeds to the slurry, and invite next year's attendees to plant these handmade seed packets—literally bringing new life to cherished memories. Special thanks to **Denver Botanic Gardens**, which donated reams of decorations from a similar event they once sponsored.





Introducing The Center for Nature-Based Solutions

As storms intensify, weather patterns shift, and ecosystems change, we evolved our conservation-related work into a center committed to helping Southwest Florida adapt for its future. The Center is a research, education, and applied science program dedicated to harnessing the power of nature to solve environmental and societal challenges. We use nature's template to find ways to improve ecosystem health, support biodiversity, strengthen economic conditions, and enhance human well-being.

Our principal areas of work are:

- Beach dune restoration
- Stormwater management
- Natural areas management
- Prescribed fire
- Native seed banking



In 2025, we saw the completion of Collier County's **13-mile dune restoration project**, conducted three prescribed fires at the Garden, added nearly **200,000 native plant seeds** to our restoration seed bank, published a new stormwater management guide, hosted a **prescribed fire workshop**, and participated in numerous regional panels and gatherings addressing matters of climate and adaptation.



Beach Dune Restoration

Once denuded beaches have sprung back to life along Collier County's coast. The Garden is proud to have worked with county leaders to devise a planting strategy that incorporated multiple species of coastal plants, many of which were grown from the seeds Garden conservationists hand collected on area beaches. The emphasis on biodiversity and insistence of locally sourced genetics is not the norm in restoration projects, but we're hoping this project will spur other coastal communities to adopt this nature-replicating approach.

Our In-House "Seed Factory"

Where do the seeds needed to replant beaches come from? Hint: not your neighborhood home improvement store.

Nationally, there's a shortage of native plant seeds available for restoration. That's why our conservationists routinely gather them from



Sharing our Knowledge

Vice President of Education & Interpretation **Britt Patterson-Weber** shared the equal importance of good science and public support in rehabilitating a beach. She presented “Restoring Beaches, Growing Communities: Turning Science into Action” at the American Public Gardens Association Annual Conference in Denver, Colorado.

Vice President of Conservation **Chad Washburn** and FGCU Assistant Professor **Jeannine Richards** presented “Fortifying the Fortress Walls: Building Resilience with Dunes” during FGCU’s Workshop for Resilience Capacity Building in Southwest Florida. **Washburn** made a similar presentation, “Building Naples Coastal Resiliency,” at the Gulf Shore Association of Condominiums 3rd Annual Water Forum.

Washburn addressed the native seed shortage in a panel discussion, “Preparing for Effective Landscape-Scale Restoration: The Role of Botanic Gardens in Native Seed Supply,” presented at the 11th World Conference on Ecological Restoration in Denver, Colorado.



FGCU plant ecology students

coastal areas. Those seeds alone, however, can’t solve the problem. Conservationists take only a small percentage of fruits from each plant population to leave food for wildlife and seeds for plant reproduction.

For that reason, we grow a portion of these wild-collected seeds into new plants. These, then, become seed-producing powerhouses. From our nursery-grown stock, we harvested **7,100 seeds of railroad vine** (*Ipomoea pes-caprae*) and some **67,500 of beach elder** (*Iva imbricata*), two important beach dune plants.

Ongoing Coastal Research

This Collier County coastal restoration project may be complete, but our partners at **Florida Gulf Coast University** continue to research beach dunes to inform future projects.

Jeannine Richards, an Assistant Professor of Restoration Ecology, and her students investigated how deep two common dune



a shrub that amassed twice as much sand as any other species.

species should be planted and how big they should be at the time of planting. They also measured how much sand various species trapped and held to determine our shoreline’s best dune builder. The winner? Beach elder,





Fire Sparks New Life

We continue to refine the practice of prescribed fire, burning about **14 acres**—about 15% of our Preserve—over the course of **four fires**. We've become a regional leader in conducting controlled burns within urban settings, and we're sharing our safety precautions, such as our use of fire hydrants and high-powered hoses, with other fire practitioners. We conduct prescribed burns for numerous reasons, including public safety and ecological health. In the latter category, we're excited to have discovered:

- **Florida Keys hempvine** (*Mikania cordifolia*) growing on our site. Even after an exhaustive plant survey in 2023, we had not spotted this species until this year. Our team found it in an area they had burned.
- A surge of native grasses following prescribed fires. We're especially excited about **Florida false beardgrass** (*Chrysopogon pauciflorus*), which the Institute for Regional Conservation classifies as "imperiled" in South Florida.



Sharing our Knowledge

The Garden's Natural Resources Team assisted with nine offsite prescribed burns, totaling about **2,400 acres**. Prescribed burn programs depend on regional collaborations—and we're grateful to all the agencies that help us safely conduct our fires.



The Garden hosted a Prescribed Fire Workshop that brought together more than **70 professionals**. Participants included representatives from two federal agencies, 11 state agencies and parks, eight local agencies and parks, two universities, and the Seminole Tribe of Florida. Together, the group practiced



setting and extinguishing a fire in the Garden's Preserve and then sat down to share strategies and deepen their knowledge about fire behavior, weather, and other fundamentals.

Along with prescribed fire, invasive plant control is another significant way we keep our Preserve healthy. We're proud to announce that Natural Resources Associates **Cody Weber** and **James Panciroli** were named chair and co-chair, respectively, of Southwest Florida's Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area, part of a statewide network of land managers working to protect native plants by culling invasive ones.

Additionally, **Weber** was a co-author on a study on Southwest Florida's box turtles, published in the journal *Northeastern Naturalist*, and in a "field notes" item in the journal *Herpetological Review*, documenting the first-known sighting of a tick on a wild striped mud turtle in the contiguous United States.



Preserve Studies

We're plant people by profession, but we're equally committed to understanding the well-being of wildlife on our site. Natural Resources Associate **Cody Weber** led **Frog Watch** surveys on our site to better understand the size and composition of frog populations. This year's baseline data revealed that more non-native frogs than native ones appear to reside here. He and fellow Garden staff and Frog Watch volunteers will continue to gather data to get a better understanding of habitat health and whether there are land management opportunities to bolster native frogs.





Protecting Native Plants for Future Generations

You might call them “The Seed Hunters.” In 2025, conservationists from the **Garden and Rookery Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve** agreed to venture to the most imperiled portions of the 110,000-acre Reserve and collect native seeds from as many species as possible. Over the course of **13 trips**, the team accumulated **37,000 seeds** representing **55 species**. Most are destined to go into deep freeze for long-term protection; some species, whose seeds won’t survive freezing, will be grown and tended in our nursery. The goal is to conserve genetics that may be lost to sea-level rise, shoreline erosion, and intensifying storms.

What did these botanical explorers find?

Iguana hackberry (*Celtis iguanaea*)

The entire U.S. population of this state-endangered tree is limited to a few locations in South Florida. It grows only in tropical hardwood hammocks on shell mounds—an exceedingly difficult habitat to find. The Garden and Rookery Bay are working to conserve the entire known population within the Reserve.

Scrub bay (*Persea humilis*)

NatureServe, a biodiversity data source, considers this small Florida native to be a “vulnerable” species because its dry, sandy, upland habitat—known as scrub—is in short supply. Interestingly, this bay species appears to have been spared the





ravages of laurel wilt, a fungal disease afflicting *Persea* trees. Tens of thousands of trees have died of it. Collier County is the southernmost edge of scrub bay's range.

Sevenyear apple (*Casasia clusiifolia*)
This tree, found only in South Florida, is not considered rare. But it is increasingly uncommon in Collier County, attracting the attention of our conservationists, who know of just one population within Rookery Bay.

Native cotton (*Gossypium hirsutum*)
Yes, the cotton that's famous in the American South also grows in the Florida woods. We collected native seeds from a wild-growing plant twice in 2025.

How Rich Is Our “Bank Account?”

To date, the Garden's conservation and restoration seed banks contain some **833,300 seeds** representing **102 species**, mostly Southwest Florida natives. The driving question for 2026: Can we top 1 million?



Global Initiatives

Forget Carmen Sandiego. Where in the world is Lina Ramirez?



Lina Ramirez

Ramirez is the coordinator of the **Caribbean and Central American Botanic Gardens Network**, a multinational coalition that believes in the power of collective action. Ramirez is based at the Garden, which serves as the Network's secretariat, or administrator.

In 2025, you could have found her visiting **ten partners** in Barbados, the Dominican Republic, Costa Rica, Bermuda, the United States, and the United Kingdom, where she attended the annual staff meeting of the umbrella organization for regional conservation networks like this one. You could find her online, too, organizing virtual workshops accessible to all.

What did Network members do in 2025?

They trained.

A workshop in Barbados drew **23 people**, representing **seven countries** and **15 institutions**. This program focused on Caribbean pests and diseases (most of which threaten Florida), plant health

monitoring, and strategies for managing invasive plant species.

A second workshop, in Costa Rica, drew **24 participants** representing eight countries and **20 institutions**. There, they worked on propagation protocols—essentially instruction manuals for growing different species of plants.

The Network hosted five virtual Tech Talks, drawing **350 participants**, to discuss topics ranging from global conservation efforts to the at-risk trees of Mesoamerica.



Colin Khoury

They talked.

Not all visits involve formal trainings. Some are designed simply to strengthen relationships and share tips. **Colin Khoury**, an internationally recognized expert on crop wild relatives, visited the Garden in October to talk about his latest endeavors and see our conservation collections. (Crop wild relatives are genetic “cousins” to domesticated crops, and their genes can help make our food more resilient.) The Garden hosted **Nelson Bautista** from the Dominican Republic's Jardín Botánico de Santiago. Bautista visited Naples to learn more about our seed bank as his garden works to set up its own.



They pushed for self-improvement.

Nineteen institutions are seeking BGCI accreditation, a voluntary program offering gardens a roadmap for improving their plant conservation efforts. BGCI is hosting a 3-year virtual workshop series to support gardens in their quests; Ramirez is providing support through the Network.

And they grew!

The number of individuals participating in the Network grew from **292** to **460** between 2024 and 2025.

Our far-flung endeavors have close-to-home benefits. From a plant perspective, Southwest Florida is more similar to the Caribbean than it is to Tampa or Orlando. As the world warms, we're more likely to find green solutions and plants suited to a changing world by looking south rather than north. These regional collaborations help all partners advance their knowledge of our shared flora.



From left to right: Donna McGinnis, Hasby Gonzalez and Nelson Bautista (Jardin Botánico de Santiago), Chad Washburn, Lina Ramirez, and Yuley Encarnación Piñeyro (Marie Selby Botanical Gardens)





A Garden for Everyone

The Garden strives to serve the community in many ways, from honoring our service members to creating unique programming.

Programs for People with Additional Needs

Nearly **500 people** attended **five Sensory-Friendly Saturday events**, special late-afternoon affairs during which the staff works to minimize noise and distractions and create memorable activities for the entire family. The biggest turnout was a January 2025 event with **Additional Needs, Inc.**, that drew **364 attendees** for the Nature Art Contest award ceremony.

Memories may be fleeting for those with Alzheimer's and related dementias, but they are cherished nonetheless. That's a premise behind **Meet Me in the Garden**, a program created in tandem with the Naples-based Alzheimer's Support Network. Over **100 people** with memory disorders and their care partners attended this program.

Community Access

For the first time since 2019, we hosted a **Garden for All Day** for families who are part of this special membership program. We welcomed more than **400 people** for a day of exploring and enjoying the Garden. This membership program is for working families who are connected to nonprofit partners and whose incomes don't allow for cultural experiences. There are nearly **700 members—63 of whom joined** on Garden for All Day.

In a related initiative, the Garden invites employees who form the foundation of our community—educators, essential workers, healthcare providers, first responders, and those in the tourism sector—to visit the Garden free of charge. Some **1,660** did so!



Free Admission Days

The Garden honors important holidays and celebrates our community by offering complimentary access on select days and for specific initiatives throughout the year.

- **Library Cardholder Days:** 2,877 guests
- **Blue Star Museums:** 661 active-duty personnel and their families
- **Fourth of July:** 764 guests
- **Haitian Flag Day:** 912 guests
- **Juneteenth:** 493 guests
- **Mother's Day:** 455 mothers and grandmothers
- **Father's Day:** 25 fathers and grandfathers
- **Kids Free All Summer:** Nearly 3,000 non-Member children, ages 4 - 17, and school groups. (Kids 3 and under and Members are always free!)
- **Johnsonville Night Lights in the Garden Community Night:** 1,050 guests



Member Events

We're grateful to our Members! One way we show it: new Member Appreciation Weeks! We offered a variety of perks, from a special Members-only Sunset Saturday to free snacks to bring-a-friend opportunities. We loved seeing new friendships forged during Member Coffee Breaks like the one at right!

We're also grateful to the **200** Members who attended our FutureScape event in April, where they mingled with staff and learned about the Garden's newest endeavors.





Celebration of Hispanic Business



Deloitte volunteers

In-Kind Contributions & Community Support

The Garden offered **89 complimentary memberships** valued at \$26,255 to area organizations to give away during fundraisers for their causes.

Just as we nurture our plants, we're also happy to help local organizations thrive. We sent representatives to **16 community events**. We also hosted and sponsored several gatherings in 2025, designed to support and grow area groups. Collaborations included:

- Hosting a family resources fair with the Collaboratory (Fort Myers) and the David Lawrence Center.
- Hosting the one-year anniversary of the Hispanic Business Council.
- Holding an annual Celebration of Hispanic Business in collaboration with the Greater Naples Chamber and Latinos239.

- Hosting the Paws for Peace event with the Shelter for Abused Women & Children and the Patty Baker Humane Society Naples.
- Sponsoring the Great Dock Canoe Race.

Volunteers Help Make Our Garden Grow!

We're grateful for the many fingers in our soil, tending our plants and our people, too! Our volunteer roster tops **215 people**, who filled over **100 roles**, and donated **9,860 hours** of their time.

In addition to individual volunteers, **11 local organizations** sent **126** of their members and employees to take on large gardening projects in a single day. All told, they performed **400 hours of service**.

Sharing our Knowledge



Volunteer Services Manager **Karen Pattison** shared her experiences managing hundreds of volunteers at the Minnesota Alliance for Volunteer Advancement

Annual Conference in St. Paul and at the American Public Gardens Association Volunteer Engagement and Guest Services Joint Symposium in Philadelphia. There, she delivered a presentation called, "Can We Talk? Getting Comfortable with Uncomfortable Conversations."





Johnsonville Night Lights in the Garden

We tweaked our favorite annual tradition with a new path and re-imagined light displays—while, of course, keeping all the elements that we and our guests hold dear.



Did you ever wonder ...

Why a well-known, national brand sponsors our hometown, local event? **Johnsonville**, the sausage company, is owned by Naples philanthropists **Ralph and Shelly Stayer**, who share their time, talent, and resources with our community. Shelly is a member of our Sustaining Leadership Council and a former chair of *Hats in the Garden*. This fun-filled event makes a very serious contribution to funding our mission!



Night Lights, by the Numbers

460

Number of plants that comprise our bromeliad tree, our emblem of winter in the tropics.

2,000

Number of holiday-inspired annual plants around Kapnick Hall.

3

Number of months it takes to string the lights before opening day. The first walkthrough is done over the summer!

45,463

Number of tickets sold.

1,174

Number of Johnsonville brats grilled at our grill station. And 724 more in Fogg Café!

15,000+

Number of phone calls received by our Visitor Services team October 25, 2025 – January 4, 2026.

124

Number of hours of live musical performances.

Too many to count

Number of lights in the Garden.



So Sweet!

Hundreds of guests celebrated *La Dolce Vita*—“the sweet life”—as imagined by 2025 *Hats in the Garden* Chair **Joan Clifford**. Clifford, deeply experienced in nonprofit leadership in Naples and Chicago, not only organized *Hats*, but she and her husband, Bob, also gifted more than \$1 million to the event, along with use of a marketing firm to bolster its visibility. Clifford arranged for a special appearance by Jenna Bush Hager, host of *TODAY with Jenna & Friends* and #1 NYTimes Best Selling Author. Hager led an afternoon of entertainment and invigorated the event’s Fund-a-Need, “Make Curiosities Happen,” supporting the Garden’s new Nature Play initiative.

The afternoon featured a champagne reception, luncheon, and an ETRO Fall 2025 Collection Runway Show presented by Saks Fifth Avenue.

All told, the luncheon and fashion show raised more than **\$4.5 million**. We’re so grateful to the Sustaining Leadership Council, which oversees the annual affair, the guests, and the sponsors who made *Hats* 2025 such a success!



Bob and Joan Clifford

Thank You to our Leaders!

At Naples Botanical Garden, plants and people thrive together—and that flourishing begins with leadership.

The Garden is strengthened each day by the generosity, vision, and stewardship of our Board of Directors and Sustaining Leadership Council. Their insight, advocacy, and philanthropic commitment shape not only what the Garden is today, but also what it will become for generations to come.

As you reflect on the achievements highlighted in this annual report, please join us in recognizing the dedicated leaders whose belief in our mission made them possible.

2025 Board of Directors

Cathy Funderburg, Chair
Nancy Anthony, Vice Chair
Robert Van Dore, Treasurer
Kermit Sutton, Secretary
Kathleen Kapnick, Immediate Past Chair

Marilyn Bartter
Carlos Batlle
Paul Beard
Mary Ann Bindley
John Buehler
Ronald Ciesla
Terry Edwards
Dr. Philip Leone

Jody Lippes
Gloria “Pixie” Messey
Al Stashis, Jr.
Karen Scott
Mary Stone
Jennifer Sullivan
Kenneth Sumner
Dr. Aysegul Timur
Jaime Weisinger

2025 Sustaining Leadership Council

Platinum

Mary Ann E. Bindley
Joanne Brown
Eleanor B. Chabraja
Joan E. Clifford
Cathy Funderburg
Donna S. Hall
Cordia Harrington
Julia Scripps Heidt
Amy Moglia Heuerman
Barbara J. Hills
Jerrilyn M. Hoffmann
Manisha D. Kapani
Kathleen Kapnick
Linda Koehn
Peggy H. LeKander
Jody B. Lippes
Joan T. Loos

Katrina Lundmark-Kash
Simone Lutgert
Karen L. Melk
Gloria Mills Messey
Barbara Morrison
Donna D. Nelson
Carole R. Sandner
Cynthia Scholl
Patrice H. Schoonmaker
F. Annette Scott
Karen M. Scott
Lynne Shotwell
Mary S. Smith
Vicky C. Smith
Shelly Stayer
Jennifer S. Sullivan
Carol A. Walter
Shirley Z. Welsh

Nancy G. White
Kathryn E. Woods

Gold

Colleen Bassett
Parker J. Collier
Grace B. Evenstad
Leslie K. S. Fogg
Melissa Keiswetter
Paula J. Malone
Linda Orlans
Katherine R. Pallas
Susan C. Stielow
Jenny W. Sutton
Connie Vandenberg
Linda G. White

Garden Visionaries

Our Garden Visionaries represent the highest level of philanthropic leadership. Their extraordinary commitments continue to shape the Garden's evolution as a world-class destination for tropical horticulture, a leader in plant conservation, and a vibrant gathering place for our community.

Because of their investment, we are empowered to think boldly, plan strategically, and turn dreams into reality.

The following individuals and families made leadership commitments between January 1, 2025 and December 31, 2025.

\$250,000 and above

Joan and Robert Clifford

Jewell S. Harris and
Marvin J. Diamond*

Jerrilyn and David Hoffmann

Kathleen and Scott Kapnick
Ann and Senator Rick Scott

\$100,000 - \$249,999

Nancy and Robert Anthony

Goodness for Pets and
The Seevers Family Foundation

Gulfshore Life

Carol and Tom Joseph

Kendel Kennedy

Linda and Tom Koehn

The Lea Family

Lipman Farms

The Martin Foundation, Inc.

Chuck and Monica McQuaid
Family Foundation

M.G. and Donna Nelson

Mary and Bill Stone

Tech-Tronics Productions, Inc.

Linda and James White

\$50,000 - \$99,999

Anonymous (2)

Andrew R. and Janet F. Miller
Foundation

Arthrex, Inc.

Mary Avellina

Kevin Beebe

Lorraine A. Carlson*

Collier County Tourist
Development Council

Kathy and Roger Cook

Thomas B. Dunkel

Edward T. Bedford Foundation

Patricia and Vince Foglia

Lawrence D. Ginger

Marissa and Burt Hartington

Stephen Iser

Sherie A. Marek

Beverly and Michael Neal

Anne Rea and Ken Bigg

Anne and J. Christopher Reyes

Karen and Robert Scott

Angela and Don N. Smith

Vicky and David Byron Smith

William and Sandra Snyder

Juliet C. Sproul

Jenny and Kermit Sutton

Van Cleef & Arpels

Carol and John Walter

Catherine Kidder Ware

Christine Williamson

Wilson & Johnson Private Foundation

Kathy and Rodney Woods

\$25,000 - \$49,999

2nd Chance Foundation

Marilyn and Brit Bartter

Gail and Paul Beard

Bentley Naples

Mary Ann and Bill Bindley

Cindy and John Bloomhall

Joanne D. and Harmon* Brown

Kathleen Cain

Eleanor and Nicholas Chabreja

Collier Community Foundation

Parker and Miles C. Collier

Anne Drackett Thomas

Michelle R. Fawcett

Fifth Third Bank

Cathy and Rob Funderburg

Jacki and Max Guinn

Donna S. Hall

Cordia and Tom Harrington

Julia and Robert Heidt, Jr.

Heidt Family Foundation

Michael and Melinda Heim

Linda and Herbert Henkel

Amy and Paul Heuerman

Barbara and Paul Hills

Sarah and Steven Jackson

Nan and Buzz Kaehler

Roy and Manisha Kapani

Rick Kash and Katrina
Lundmark-Kash

Samantha and Robert Kiffney and
the Kiffney Foundation

Mary Ruth and Gil Leavitt

Peggy and Dan LeKander

Jody B. Lippes

Joan Loos

Simone and Scott Lutgert

Elizabeth Martel*

Karen Melk

Gloria and Robert Messey

Kathleen D. Mezzalingua

Barbara Morrison

Anne Morton

National Recreation Foundation

William Raveis

The Robinson Foundation

Carole R. Sandner

Cynthia and Michael Scholl

Patrice H. Schoonmaker

Lynne and Chip Shotwell

Dyan and John Smith

Mary and Stephen Byron Smith

Richard K. Smucker

Michael and Karin Standen

Bill and Sandi Strong

Jen and Robert Sullivan

The Village Shops on Venetian Bay

Shirley and Peter Welsh

Nancy G. White

Collector's Circle

Mary Avellina

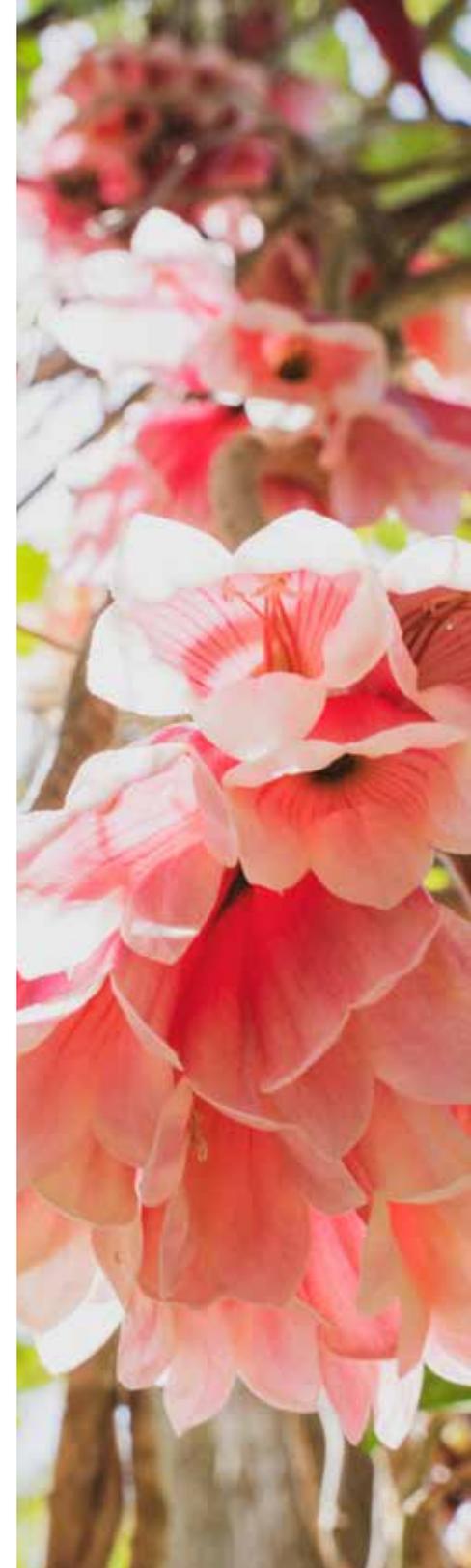
Catherine Kidder Ware

The Lea Family

Mary Ruth and Gil Leavitt

Christine Williamson

*deceased



Generosity Makes Gardens Grow

Like the plants we nurture, the Garden thrives through consistent care and sustained support.

Memberships, annual gifts, grants, sponsorships, and philanthropic partnerships fuel our mission—advancing conservation, expanding environmental education, and maintaining the horticultural excellence that defines Naples Botanical Garden.

We are especially grateful to our Royal Palm Society Members, whose annual contributions of \$2,000 or more provide essential leadership support. Their generosity strengthens our programs, supports our dedicated staff, and ensures that the Garden remains a place where discovery, beauty, and stewardship flourish year after year.

Royal Palm Society & Special Friends

Anonymous (17)
2nd Chance Foundation
Constance N. and Paul R. Abbey
Usha and Monte Ahuja
Don and Christine Alexander
Constance Alsbrook
Rett Alsbrook
Patricia and Don Altorfer
Cynthia Finley Anderson
Jeffrey Anderson and Derek R. Sippel
Maryann Anderson
Roz and Doug Anderson
Andrew R. and Janet F. Miller Foundation
Edith G. Andrew
Nancy and Robert Anthony
Barbara and Stephen Archer
Maria N.* and William H. Arends
The Arlington of Naples
Paul and Eileen Arsenault
Arthrex, Inc.
Sandra and Keith Asdourian
Kelly and Brent Asplundh

Association of Zoological Horticulture
Mary and Alan Atterbury
Susan Audi
Jennifer and Dennis Auray
Mary Avellina
John and Bette Aymar
Cathy and Tim Babington
Debra J. Bailey
Patty and Jay Baker
Cindy and Richard Balaz
Kathie and Arthur Baldadian
Barbara and Ronald Balsler
Joan Barron
James and Elizabeth Barton
Marilyn and Brit Bartter
Colleen and Brian Bassett
Lauren and Carlos Batlle
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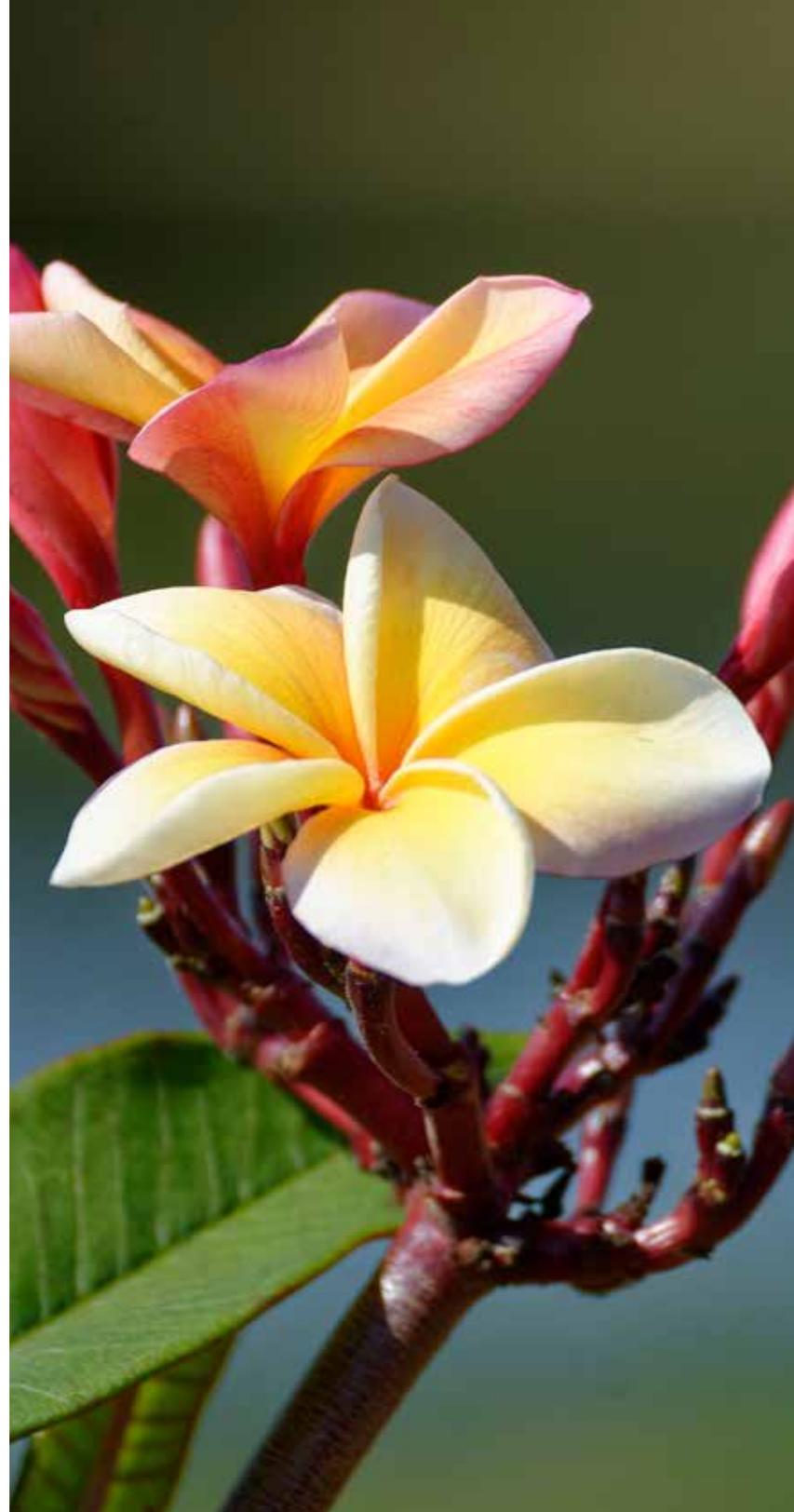
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