

NAPLES  
BOTANICAL  
GARDEN

# Cultivate

SUMMER 2026



Get up close and personal to waterlilies like this *Nymphaea* 'Amethyst Mist' during the Garden's Walk Among the Waterlilies program; see page 17.

Mark your calendars: Waterlily Weekend is August 29 & 30. Turn to page 8 for details.  
*Photo by John Eder.*



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## CULTIVATE SUMMER 2026

### OUR MISSION

Where Plants & People Thrive Together™

Naples Botanical Garden conserves the plants and habitats of the tropics, cultivates beauty, offers knowledge, and inspires the protection of nature.

### ON THE COVER

Turn to page 15 to learn more about this adorable squirrel treefrog (*Dryophytes squirellus*), shown seeking shelter in the gentle folds of *Plumeria rubra* petals.

Photo by Sara Chism.

### Editor

Jenny Fuentes

### Graphic Designers

Jon Hioki  
Amy McQueen

### Photographer

John Eder

### Contributors

Jesslyn Ferentz  
Trisha Griffin  
Sammy Meinders  
Fernando Pereira  
Julia Van Fleet  
Erin White  
Caitlyn Williams

### Editorial Director

Jennifer Reed

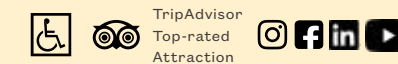
### Director, Communications & Marketing

Renée Waller

### Vice President & Chief Revenue Officer

Andrea Nickrent

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Marcia and L. Bates Lea Asian Garden

Southwest Florida may be settling into its slower summer months, but here in the Garden, we're as busy as ever. In fact, as you receive this magazine, we're working to make one of our most consequential decisions to date.

I'm referring, of course, to our search for a new President & CEO, a leader who will guide us into our next era. I'm delighted to hold this position in the interim; I cherish my longtime Board involvement, including my term as chair, from 2015 – 2022, and I gladly said "yes" when the current board asked me to serve. My contributions are but one piece of this interim puzzle; Garden leaders and staff are really the ones ensuring that we don't miss a beat.

That's, perhaps, why we're so busy. Through spring and summer, you can enjoy festivals, such as Family Wonder Days and Tasting the Tropics, see page 7, view two new art



exhibitions in Kapnick Hall, and see our plant collections at their most sumptuous, nourished by seasonal rain. Summer is when our educators develop new programs—a process far more detailed and research-driven than our guests might imagine. Learn about it on page 33.

Everything we do is made possible by you—our Members and Donors. On page 43, you'll hear the story of one couple who discovered the Garden, fell in love with it, and worked

with our Philanthropy team to identify giving opportunities that resonated. You'll also meet some of the faces behind *Hats in the Garden*, page 45, our signature annual soiree, organized by the Sustaining Leadership Council, a group of our most ardent supporters.

Thank you for your ongoing support in this busy season of change. No matter who occupies the corner office, our focus is on cultivating the best possible experience for you, our Members.

**Carl Crosetto**

*Interim President & CEO  
Naples Botanical Garden*

✉ Questions and letters to the editor may be sent to [email@naplesgarden.org](mailto:email@naplesgarden.org).

The fruit of the yellow mangosteen (*Garcinia xanthochymus*) ripens in the late spring sun. Native to Indonesia and Australia, this fruiting tree can be found in the Marcia and L. Bates Lea Asian Garden. Hungry for more? Join us for Tasting the Tropics, June 27 & 28. See page 8. *Photo by John Eder.*

# SUMMER 2026 Events & Exhibitions

Plan your visit  
to the Garden



NOW - MAY 25

This color-inspired exhibition explores the botanical origins of pigments, floral hues, and the use of color in landscape design.



## Family Wonder Days

MAY 23 & MAY 24  
9 AM - 2 PM

Garden-wide fun with games, activities, and scavenger hunts.

SUPPORTED BY  
Fifth Third Bank  
Goodness for Pets  
The Seevers Family Foundation

## NATURE'S palette

NOW - JUNE 21  
Kapnick Hall

Members of the National Association of Women Artists Florida Chapter pay homage to the vibrant colors and tones of the subtropical world.

Pat Zalisko, "Bewitched," 2024, acrylic on canvas (detail)



NOW - JULY 12  
Fogg Café

This juried exhibition showcases creative works by the Garden's own staff.



## Wonder

FRIDAY - MONDAY • 10AM - 12PM

W.O.N.D.E.R. moves indoors June 1.  
Beat the heat and keep the learning going all summer long!



## TASTING THE TROPICS

JUNE 27 & 28 • 8AM - 2PM

Fruit-forward fun: Tastings, tours, demos, and a plant sale for favorites to take home.



## Waterlily Weekend

AUGUST 29 & 30  
9AM - 2PM

Dive into beauty with demos, tours, family activities, and more!

## Summer Fun Starts Here

Kids 17 & under receive  
FREE Garden admission,  
June 1 - September 30!

Children 3 and under enjoy free  
Garden admission year-round



## Music IN THE GARDEN



JUNE 13, 2026 • 12 - 2PM

FEATURING  
HAVY RODRIGUEZ &  
THE MIAMI SPLASH BAND

PRESENTED BY  
Citizens

Summer Hours: June 1 – September 30 • 8am – 2pm

CLOSED TUESDAYS IN AUGUST & SEPTEMBER



Free for Members



Included with Garden admission



Chairs and blankets encouraged.

Details at [naplesgarden.org](http://naplesgarden.org)

# Cranberry Vibes, Sunshine Roots

## All about roselle

By Jesslyn Ferentz, Content Associate



### Did you know?

In 2024, the Garden's roselle crop flavored a limited-edition beer dubbed "Hibiscus Kiss" by Ankrolab Brewing Company, one of our Bayshore neighbors. Scan to read about the previous partnership.



Roselle (*Hibiscus sabdariffa*) may look like a humble version of its showy cousin, the *Hibiscus*, but this fast-growing, short-lived plant holds back a surprise treat. Its flowers aren't flashy—until they fade. The calyces (the part of the flower that surrounds the growing bud) will swell at the base, turn deep red, and gleam like tiny rubies in the sun.

Florida pioneers even nicknaming it the "Florida Cranberry" in homage to its tart flavor and crimson color. And the excitement continues in the kitchen: Those jewel-toned calyces are often steeped to make jewel-toned refreshers such as Agua de Jamaica in Mexico and sorrel throughout the Caribbean.



-  **WHERE**  
Kapnick Caribbean Garden
-  **WHEN**  
See roselle until it's harvested in the fall.

### In Bloom this Summer



Photo by Kurt Miller

**Bay rum tree** (*Pimenta racemosa*)  
Spring and summer

Buehler Family Foundation  
Enabling Garden



Photo by Paul Osborn

**Beautyberry** (*Callicarpa americana*)  
Late spring to early summer

Scott Florida Garden, near  
the Preserve



**Marigold** (*Tagetes*)  
Late summer to fall, especially during the  
Dia de los Muertos Celebration

Container plantings throughout  
the Garden

*Psst ... Each of these summer bloomers also repels bugs.* 

# Is that a Waterlily? Meet the lotus, an aquatic marvel

By Sammy Meinders, Communications Associate

The enchanting blooms and curious leaves of the lotus (*Nelumbo nucifera*) greet you from the water as you wander through the Lea Asian Garden. These remarkable plants, often mistaken for waterlilies (*Nymphaea* sp.), emerge and grow tall above the waterline, while waterlilies float on the surface.

The serene, inviting flowers of the lotus are much more than meets the eye. From inspiring scientific advancements to culinary creations, the contributions of this plant go far beyond its aesthetics.

### The Lotus Effect

You may have heard of the term “the lotus effect.” Lotuses have large, platter-like leaves that are rough and waxy, giving the surface a water-repellant property. When water hits a lotus leaf, it beads up and rolls off, taking any dirt and debris with it. This discovery has led to scientific innovation aimed at imitating this natural phenomenon in daily life.



See the lotus effect during programming on Waterlily Weekend, August 29 & 30.



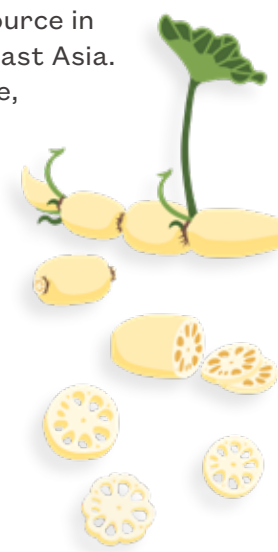
You can admire our collection of lotus all summer long in the Lea Asian Garden. Photo by John Eder.

### Dinner is Served

Lotus is a staple food source in China, India, and Southeast Asia. The entire plant is edible, with two go-tos:

#### Rhizomes

- Grow beneath the mud in long, linked chains
- Have a crunchy, potato-like texture and mild sweet flavor
- Uses range from stir fries and soups to pickling and baking



#### Seeds

- Have a mildly sweet taste
- Are eaten fresh, dried and popped, or ground into a powder for flavoring desserts



### Cultural Icon

Lotus, often called sacred lotus, has deep cultural and religious significance in Hinduism and Buddhism, and has been in cultivation for over 3,000 years. It serves as a symbol of life, rebirth, and enlightenment as it grows from muddy waters and blooms into light and beauty.

### Where to find lotus in the Garden





Photos by John Eder

## What's Happening

An artful summer in the Garden

### ChromaFlora

On view through May 25

Last chance to experience this exhibition! Let nature lead the way as you explore this painter's palette filled with color. Explore this curated space within the Kapnick Caribbean Garden to discover how pigments are formed, why plants display certain hues, and how color connects art, science, and the natural world.



SUPPORTED BY Wintrust Banking Center



### Blooming at Work

On view through July 12 in Fogg Café



The Garden is a living canvas of plants and of people. This team works together to conserve the plants and habitats of the tropics, cultivate beauty, offer knowledge, and inspire the protection of nature. In the process, creativity takes root.

Here, Garden staff share a bit more about the stories behind a few of the works in the show.

### Wildflower Study (Left and Right Panels), 2025

Acrylic on canvas

Mary Helen Reuter, Director of Education & Interpretation



"It is not always easy to see the wildflowers of Florida; you have to look at just the right time, in the right place, and hope they are in bloom! This painting is a study of my favorite Florida flowers and a glimpse of the wildlife that may live among the blossoms."



### Heron at Sunset, 2023

Oil

Kaitlyn Handley, Educator II



"One of my favorite things to do at the Garden is look for birds at sunset as they fly over our lakes searching for a spot to land. The great blue heron is a sight to see when the sun provides a vibrant backdrop of purples, pinks, and oranges."

**Through a Green Frame, 2025**

Acrylic on canvas  
Ralph Klebosis, Senior Manager of Operations



"This piece was inspired by my 13 years working at the Garden, installing a variety of landscape and botanical pieces in our exhibitions. It's more abstract and imaginative rather than realism. I wanted to challenge myself to see what I could create in a single sitting two-hour-painting session. This encompasses the bright and vibrant abstract look I was trying to achieve."



**Plumeria Petal Prince, 2025**

Photograph  
Sara Chism, Lab & Nursery Propagation Associate



"I was taking cuttings from the Garden's plumeria collection when my coworkers and I found a native tree frog sleeping in one of the flowers. He opened his sleepy eyes but didn't seem to mind at all that we were all watching him. It is always encouraging to see native wildlife, especially with so many invasive reptiles and amphibians in South Florida."



I hope that this photo inspires others to take their time to look for wildlife in places they may never expect; you never know where a cute little frog is napping!"



Mangrove cuckoo (*Coccyzus minor*)

**Birding**



The birds of summer have landed! This weekly, volunteer-led birding group departs from the Smith Entry Prow Tuesdays at 8am. Bring your binoculars, bug spray, and an eye for the avian life dotting the canopy. Check the Garden events calendar for birding dates and times in August and September.

**Daily Tours**

From cacti and succulents here in Southwest Florida, to pollinators and the plants they pollinate, learn something new about your Garden. Through May 31, tours commence at 10am, 12pm, and 2pm. June - September, tours are at 9:30am. Each day's tour schedule is posted at the Garden entrance so you can make the most of each and every visit.



**COLLIER COUNTY CULTURE MEANS BUSINESS.**



**NATURE'S palette**

On view through June 21 • Kapnick Hall

See the subtropics in all their splendor in these works glowing with verdant greens, brilliant blooms, and the gentle shifts of color that shape our living landscape. This exhibition is organized by Naples Botanical Garden in partnership with the National Association of Women Artists Florida Chapter.



# Make a Splash this Summer

*On land or in the water—  
discover tropical plants at  
your Garden year-round.*

By Jesslyn Ferentz, Content Associate



*Nymphaea  
Amethyst Mist'*

## Walk Among the Waterlilies

**Dive in June 5**

*Discounted Member rates apply.*

Slip into your waders and step into the Water Garden, where blossoms dapple the water's surface and the Curator of Special Collections guides you into their shimmering world. Walk Among the Waterlilies invites you to stand among these aquatic plants, capturing their beauty.

Begin shaping your own nature photography portfolio with an accessible introduction to macro techniques and deepen your appreciation for our celebrated waterlily collection.



Scan or visit [naplesgarden.org](https://www.naplesgarden.org) to register for your aquatic adventure.



Photo by John Eder

## Garden Grounds Cart Tours

**Your summer just got cooler**

*Discounted Member rates apply.*

Hop aboard an air-conditioned electric tram for a 45-minute guided tour through the Garden's tropical landscapes. Along the way, hear stories from the Garden's past, learn about conservation practices such as prescribed burns, peek behind the scenes at the Evenstad Horticulture Campus, and enjoy sweeping views of our 90 acres of protected natural areas. You might even spot wildlife crossing the path—a sign of the healthy, natural ecosystems we steward. It's a staff-led experience the whole family can enjoy.



Gopher tortoise



Learn about our private group tram tours beginning July 1! Scan or email [groupinfo@naplesgarden.org](mailto:groupinfo@naplesgarden.org).

# Tiptoeing Through the Intricacies of Grant Writing

Trisha Griffin, Development Manager



Photo by John Eder

Trisha Griffin, a second-generation, Miami-born Floridian, has always been keenly aware of her surroundings—take, for instance, the rustling of a gopher tortoise during a trail walk, or the fragrance of plumeria in bloom. A passion for helping her local environment dovetails into another prowess: managing the Garden’s grant program, which accounted for more than \$1 million in our 2024-2025 season. The Garden’s conservation initiatives are expanding, propelled, in part, by Griffin’s successes securing grant funding for such endeavors—the very thing that drew her to the Garden in the first place.

I started working as a part-time subcontractor at the Garden in December 2014. The Chabraja Visitor Center had just opened, and I processed memberships and gifts. With experience in nonprofits since the late '90s, I had done a little bit of everything, including grant writing here and there. Writing has always been my passion; it was

my goal to be a full-time grant writer. After one year at the Garden, I was hired as an employee and handling all grants.

The fun thing about managing our grant program is, it’s always changing based on what we’re doing. I find it challenging, and I always take it personally, as if it were my money. In my mind, this is our money, and I want the most possible for our mission at the end of the day.

There are ingredients that go well together to make grants happen. You know when you have the grandmother who says, “I don’t measure.” It’s kind of like that. You must be organized; you must be on top of the grantors’ guidelines and deadlines: Two, three, four, five years in a row they’re the same, then they change. You can never make assumptions. You must be hypervigilant, dotting your i’s and crossing your t’s.

A lot of what we do is cyclical. In the fall, everyone else is gearing up for season; for me, it’s the opposite. The majority of my applications are in the spring and summer and then it tapers

down. However, you don’t just apply for a grant and forget about it. There’s always something to do: researching, tracking, reporting. Grant funders want to know their money is being put to good use; it is important to track where the money is spent and report on the outcomes.

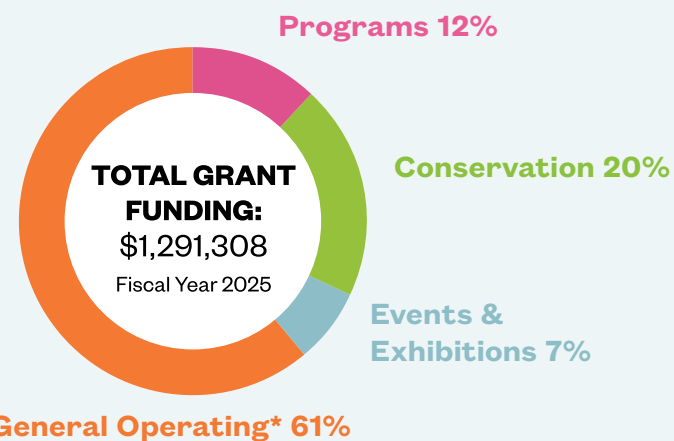
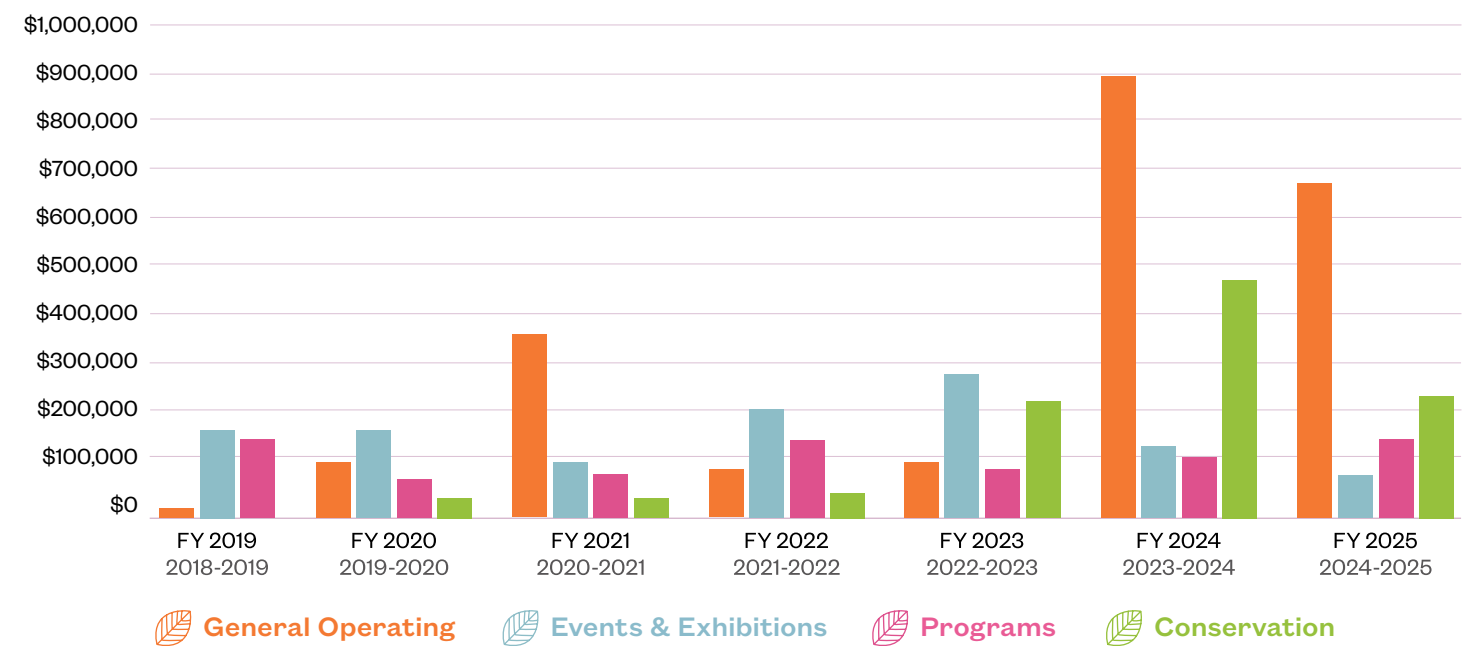
There’s nothing that’s black and white about grant funding. Opportunities fluctuate based on a variety of factors, from extreme circumstances like pandemics and hurricanes to the availability of funds—or lack thereof—as has been the case in recent cycles.

Private foundations and regional organizations are our grant funding bread and butter. The

Garden’s government funding has grown. It speaks volumes about what we’re doing and offering the community. The biggest opportunities are conservation related, in support of beach dunes, stormwater management, seed collecting, prescribed burns, etc. Those tend to be multi-year, million-dollar, ongoing projects. So much of the work we’re doing in the Caribbean and internationally is making that possible.

While there are no guarantees, as the Garden grows and our programs become more robust, the more benefits there are to the community—and the more opportunities we have for grant funding.

## Grant funding by fiscal year: Watch the Garden grow



\*Arts & culture, Lea Asian Garden, staffing, publications

### Who funds grants?

In fiscal year 2025, the Garden received money from:

- Government • 66%**  
Collier County, Institute of Museum and Library Services, State of Florida
- Foundations • 31%**  
Community and family foundations
- Organizations • 3%**



Performance Lawn  
Photos by John Eder

# Just a Trim

## Maintain healthy, hurricane-prepped trees with our pruning tips

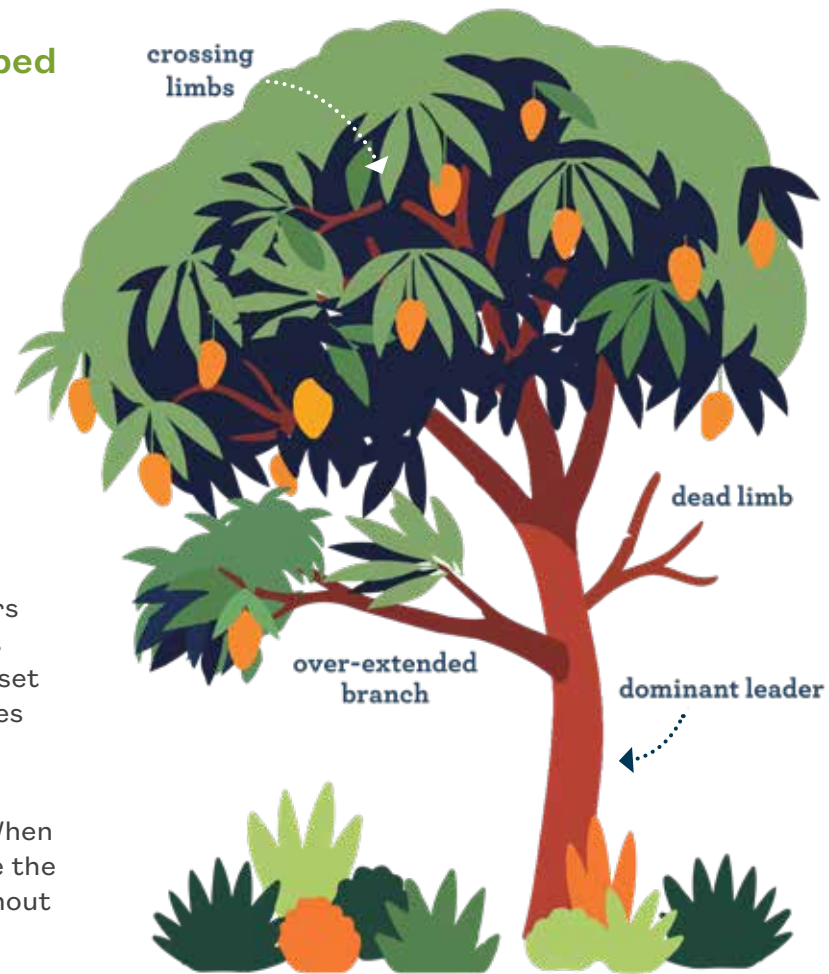
By Fernando Pereira, Lead Arborist



When pruning your trees in preparation for hurricane season, there are a few things you should consider. Let's get into why pruning your trees matters, how you can tell if a tree needs pruning, and what to look for if you decide to hire an arborist for some help instead.

I'd like to preface this by saying that tree owners should be appropriately maintaining their trees year-round. Being proactive with tree care will set you up for success when hurricane season comes around and will create more resilient trees.

Creating good structure in a tree is the key to intentional, long-term hurricane preparation. When correctly done, structural pruning can increase the amount of wind stress that a tree can take without major damage.



### Structure

The following are ways you can best create structure in your tree:

**Have a single dominant leader,** or one major trunk. The International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) defines a dominant leader as a stem that dominates the entire or a portion of the crown, with a diameter that is larger than all its lateral branches. If there isn't a main leader, we subordinate, or trim, the co-dominant limbs: We use reduction cuts to slow the growth of the competing limbs to make sure there is one leader and that it remains dominant.

**Reduce over-extended branches.** An over-extended branch is one that has grown too long and too far away from the main trunk. Most of its weight will be on the end, putting a lot of stress on the union, making it weak and likely to fail under any additional stress.

**Remove crossing limbs** or ones that are rubbing. This will damage bark and start to create decay.

**Remove any dead or damaged limbs.** These may fly out in heavy winds and cause damage elsewhere.

### Pruning

If your tree is young, now is the best time to prune it. By following these tips, you can train its growth habits and create a proper structure:

- Never remove more than 30% of your tree when you are trimming.
- Always make reduction cuts back to a branch union.
- Most of your pruning should be done on the outer part of the tree's crown.
- When reducing or removing a limb, use the Three-Cut Method.
- Your final cut when removing a limb needs to be on the outside of the branch collar.

### Finding an Arborist

Now, if you'd feel more comfortable hiring an arborist, here are a few tips:

- Find an arborist who is International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) certified.
- Get referrals to ensure the arborist's work is of the highest quality.

No one can predict what will happen to a tree when a hurricane hits, even if you've done everything possible to care for it. However, following these tips will decrease the damage done during storms and increase your tree's resilience in good weather and in bad!

## PRUNING 101 Three-Cut Method



Approximately 6" - 12" from the trunk, make an undercut halfway through the width of the limb.



Next, cut the top of the branch a few inches away from the bottom cut, allowing the branch to fall.



Finally, cut the remaining part of the branch away from the tree at the trunk outside of the branch collar.



# The Space Between

## Linking the Bayshore District and Sugden Regional Park

By Jennifer Reed

Photos by John Eder

**A** new pedestrian walkway linking the Bayshore District with Sugden Regional Park opened on a sunny, late-February morning, bringing to life a vision at least a decade in the making.

The 17-acre site features a promenade, a boardwalk over a quiet pond, grassy gathering spots, and thousands of carefully selected plants and trees. It connects with a wooded pathway leading to the park's 60-acre Lake Avalon, one of the county's only freshwater beaches. Before its opening, Bayshore residents had to drive some 2 miles to access the main entrance off U.S. 41.

The project holds a special significance to the Garden: The property was our original site.

In the late 1990s, Garden founders had begun designing and planting (there's a remnant row of palms along Bayshore Drive) but halted development once the late business executive and philanthropist Harvey Kapnick Jr. offered a bigger vision and a financial gift to buy the 170 acres where the Garden sits today.

The property, located between Lunar Street and Jeepers Drive, will bear the Garden's stamp after all. We've been growing plants for several years, providing some 700 trees, shrubs, and groundcovers installed by our staff over a three-day blitz in mid-January.



“This is a great extension of the Garden,” Vice President of Horticulture Brian Galligan told a crowd of about 100 residents, business owners, and county leaders during the February 26 ribbon-cutting ceremony. “We love being a part of this.”

The property is owned by the Bayshore Gateway Triangle Community Redevelopment Agency, which spearheaded the project.

“A lot of people believed in us. A lot of people didn’t,” said Agency Board Chair Maurice Gutierrez. “But there’s a lot to conviction and to really sticking with something that you believe can be great.”

A Bayshore resident since the 1970s, Gutierrez remembers a once blighted, neglected neighborhood, now surging with upscale new development. “It’s just been a real voyage. Without the community’s support, this never would have happened,” he said.

For the Garden, the project offered a chance to return to our roots and share our collection with the community. During the January planting spree, Galligan detailed the Garden’s contributions.

“We’re mixing in some of the very iconic species that you don’t see much anymore, like the mastic tree (*Sideroxylon foetidissimum*), which is just a very stately, beautiful, large tree,” he said of the Florida native hardwood.

The property, he added, offers a unique opportunity to showcase species not commonly used in landscape design. To that end, Galligan said he is glad CRA officials and Landscape Architect Kevin Mangan elected to plant an allée of satinleaf trees (*Chrysophyllum oliviforme*) framing a newly constructed promenade. It’s a favorite of his, and the Garden has been working to get the slender and shapely native, with its coppery foliage, more

widely available in the nursery trade.

For color and visual interest, the Garden provided some unique flowering trees, such as the pink and white *Tabebuia bahamensis*. In addition to the Garden’s contribution, some 175 new trees and 13,000 shrubs, aquatic plants, groundcovers, and other plant types were added to the site by other firms involved in the project.

The redevelopment agency aspires to create an arts district populated with studios, artist cottages, and, potentially, larger regional arts institutions. This pedestrian walkway was a critical first step in soliciting arts-minded developers to share in this vision, said CRA Project Manager Tami Scott. “It’s the old saying: ‘If you build it, they will come.’”

The site’s development has important ecological implications, too.

The parcel was clogged with invasive species so dense that Mangan said it took him some 45 minutes to pick his way through just a few acres, trying to get to a single royal palm (*Roystonea regina*) by the water. He, Garden staff, and representatives from other contracted firms, such as Natives of Corkscrew, combed the site, flagging native plants to preserve and exotic, invasive plants to remove. The former proved to be scant—a smattering of palms, including the royal. Some 95% of plant matter was deemed invasive and removed and ground into mulch, which was then used as groundcover there and in the Garden.

“(Invasive plant material) grows quickly, and it shades out and competes for sun and water soils in a manner that keeps the natives at bay,” said Mangan, a Vice Senior Principal of Stantec, a global engineering, architecture, and environmental firm with a focus on sustainability. Removing the invasive plants will allow newly planted natives and regionally appropriate plants—species that co-exist with our native flora—to thrive.

A sizeable portion of the site was resculpted for stormwater collection and storage—important for flood protection—and the edges of waterbodies planted with species that help filter contaminants before stormwater flows into a small pond, known locally as Lake Kelly. The pond connects with Halderman Creek, which leads to Naples Bay.

The walkway begins with a more formal, designed stretch fronting Bayshore Drive. There, Stantec designed a 15-by-500-foot promenade reflective of the Garden’s history on that site and its present-day importance to the Bayshore District.

Continued on page 28



Clockwise, from left: The pattern on the 15-by-500-foot brick promenade resembles fallen oak leaves; a Kubota 530 tractor and auger is used to prep the soil at the Sugden site; Fred Bodmer, Nursery Gardener 1, transports a tree for planting; Garden staff spanning multiple departments assist with planting on January 13.

"It's just been a real voyage.  
Without the community's support,  
this never would have happened."

—Maurice Gutierrez, Community Redevelopment Agency Board Chair



Ribbon-cutting in motion: Ceremony attendees, including local biking and running club members, set out on the 1,500-linear-foot boardwalk following remarks.



Vice President of Horticulture Brian Galligan shares remarks during the Bayshore Boardwalk's February 26 ribbon cutting.



Nearly two dozen Naples Botanical Garden staff were among approximately 100 people who attended the event, shown at bottom left.



Continued from page 25

"Imagine, if you took a bunch of tiny oak leaves in the cup of your hand and dropped them on the ground, how they would fall and overlay each other. That's what we used as a driver for this pattern," Mangan explained. As pedestrians walk east, toward the park, they come to a 1,500-linear-foot boardwalk. That portion of the site, replanted entirely with natives, will be naturalistic in appearance—the landscape as it might have looked before invasive plants overran it.

"Once we took out the exotics, we just discovered this jewel," Scott said.

Residents are excited to use their new amenity. Running and biking clubs were among those who gathered to celebrate the walkway's opening. Members said they were glad to have a safe, well-lit alternative to busy main streets.

Jamie DePaola is founder of the Bayshore Run Club, which she established to encourage social connections among runners. "This links communities," she said.

# how COLORS speak to us

By Julia Van Fleet, Educator I

Color isn't just something we see—it's something we *feel*. It shapes our emotions, what we notice, and even how we behave. From the shade of green that soothes our minds to the burst of red that energizes us, color weaves through every aspect of life—biological, emotional, and cultural.

## The Language of Color & Emotion

Before exploring color in nature, it helps to understand more broadly how color affects us. Throughout history and across cultures, people have assigned meaning to colors—from the calm of blue to the energy and vitality of red. Modern psychology and neuroscience continue to explore these effects and find that color can influence everything from our heart rate to our mood.

Although the field of color psychology is still developing, some interesting studies have looked at how the colors of plants, and more broadly, nature, affect our emotions:

A review of 128 years of psychological research, involving 42,000-plus participants from 64 countries, confirmed that people do reliably associate different colors with different emotions.

For example, bright warm colors (reds, oranges, yellows) tend to evoke energy and excitement, while cooler colors (blues, greens) are more likely to elicit calm, peaceful, or restorative feelings.

A study of foliage colors found that viewing green, light green, green-yellow, and green-white plants was associated with relaxation, comfort, naturalness, and lower oxy-hemoglobin (a measure linked to stress) in participants' brains.

A small-scale study on fall foliage suggests that combinations of varying hues reduced stress, improved vitality, and influenced heart rate and brainwave activity among trial participants.

In one floral color experiment, participants were asked to look at red, yellow, and white flowers for three minutes a piece. Researchers monitored physiological responses, such as heart rate, and administered psychological questionnaires during the process to gauge participants' moods. Looking at red and yellow flowers, compared to white ones, led to higher alpha brain wave activity, improved mood, and increased parasympathetic nervous system activity (comparable to a body at rest).

The Garden's seasonal theme, *A Living Canvas*, continues with exhibitions such as *ChromaFlora*, on view through May 25. Explore the Garden as a dynamic work of art. Scan to learn more about our current exhibitions.



A pattern emerges: **greens** and softer, more natural tones tend to *calm, restore,* and bring a sense of belonging; **brighter,** more saturated colors, such as **red** and **yellow,** **energize,** uplift, or activate.

From those studies, a pattern emerges: greens and softer, more natural tones tend to calm, restore, and bring a sense of belonging; brighter, more saturated colors, such as red and yellow, energize, uplift, or activate attention. The full findings are a bit more nuanced. Tone, saturation, and hue, for example, matter; people will respond differently to a pale blue than they will a deep navy or a bright yellow versus a soft, buttery one.

Beyond single colors, being surrounded by nature's full range of shades can have powerful effects on our well-being. In Japan, the practice of Shinrin-yoku ("forest bathing") encourages people to slow down, walk mindfully, and take in the sights, sounds, and smells of the forest. Research shows that spending time among trees, especially under green canopies, helps reduce stress, slows the heart rate, and clears the mind. This calming effect comes from more than just color. Forest air is rich in natural compounds called phytoncides, chemicals released by trees and plants that boost immune function and lower stress hormones.

### The Science of Color in Nature

What we see as color comes from the way light interacts with surfaces and how our eyes and brains process what we see. In the natural world, color has distinct purposes. Animals use it to attract mates, warn predators, or camouflage themselves. Plants do the same—brightly colored flowers lure pollinators, leaves can signal pests to stay away, and colorful fruits invite animals to eat them and spread their seeds. These same colors also affect us as humans, not only impacting mood but also influencing us in ways we perhaps don't even realize.

### Color in Everyday Life: Branding, Food & Design

Marketing specialists and graphic designers understand well how color shapes behavior and perception. In branding and design, companies choose colors to affect how we feel about products. For example, red can stimulate energy or hunger (think of restaurant logos), green signals health, freshness, and sustainability, and blue evokes trust (common in tech and finance). These associations show how deeply color is rooted into our instincts and emotions.

Even in food choices, color matters. Research shows that brightly colored foods, such as bright orange fruit or deep green vegetables, are associated with freshness and vitality. Color can make a meal feel more appealing, comforting, or nourishing before we even take a bite! The next time you go out to eat, notice how the chef uses color in plating the food.

### Color in the Garden

As you wander the Garden, consider a vibrant red hibiscus (*Hibiscus rosa-sinensis*) juxtaposed against dark green foliage. How do you respond to it? Did it draw your attention like a magnet?

Now turn your attention to the blue sky vine (*Thunbergia grandiflora*) as it weaves its way around the oolite pergola in the Kapnick Caribbean Garden. Notice how it stands out against the surrounding greenery. Does its vivid blue color stir any particular feeling within you? Bougainvillea, too, appears throughout the Garden, its deep pink blooms creating a striking contrast against the dark green leaves. As you take in these colors, what emotions arise? Do any memories surface?

Along the way, look for rare or unusual colors, such as the bright blue of the butterfly pea flower (*Clitoria ternatea*) or the iridescent jade vine (*Strongylodon macrobotrys*). Did it pique your curiosity or spark a sense of wonder?

Do colors trigger memories and emotion? Red berries might call up happy remembrances of holidays past, a marbled mango might bring you back to a grandparent's yard. These personal associations make color more than just something we see—they make it something we feel. In this way, color in the Garden isn't just about how plants grow or survive, but about how they touch us through light, feeling, and memory.



Blue sky vine

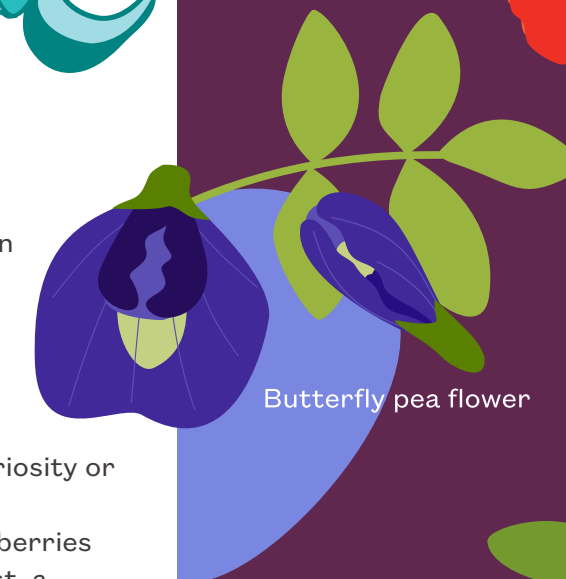


### Look for these colors in the Garden

Red hibiscus



Jade vine



Butterfly pea flower

Bougainvillea



# Where Tours Take Root

There are no “plug and play” programs at your Garden. Instead, every tour, drop-in session, field trip, and special offering is created by staff to interpret our collections and illuminate the unique, natural wonders of Southwest Florida and beyond. Many hours—and many minds—go into the making of a Garden program. Here’s one example of how we do it.

Copy by Garden Education & Visitor Experience Staff  
Photos by John Eder

## We start with curiosity.



Petticoat palm  
(*Copernicia macroglossa*)



Flame of the forest  
(*Chambeyronia macrocarpa*)



Kosi cycad  
(*Encephalartos ferox*)



Saw palmetto  
(*Serenoa repens*)

 What kind of palm is this? Are palm trees *really* trees? Is this plant with the fronds a palm? How many kinds of palm trees are there in Florida?



Tahina palm (*Tahina spectabilis*)



Hope's cycad (*Lepidozamia hopei*)



Kapnick Caribbean Garden

Although we could talk plants all day long, we show some restraint. We limit our tours to 30 – 45 minutes and a half mile.

For the Palms & Cycads tour, we distilled our plant selections to eight specific specimens out of more than a thousand palms and cycads on display. We look for plants that are easy to spot from Garden paths and for botanical stars with interesting stories to tell—like the Tahina palm (*Tahina spectabilis*) and Hope's cycad (*Lepidozamia hopei*).

We consider a theme, or throughline, for the tour. In this case, we focus on the intrinsic value of palms and cycads to their native ecosystems and how their presence in the Garden demonstrates conservation in action.

Keep going.  
Keep learning.

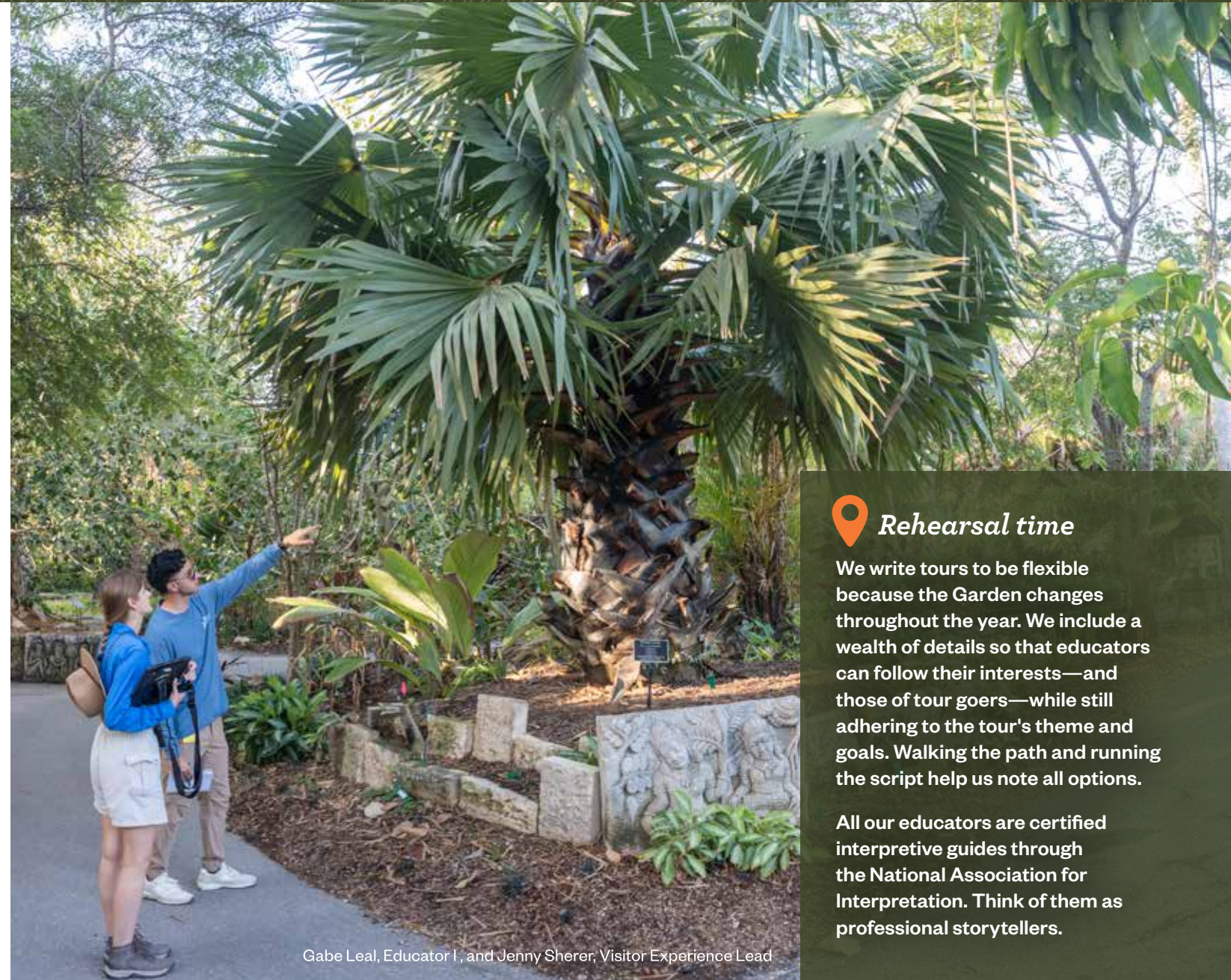


## Mapping what's next

We now map a route that starts at the Smith Entry Prow. For the Palms & Cycads tour, the route ends in the Kapnick Caribbean Garden, home of the Ware Palm Collection. There, we share the story of the Carossier palm (*Attalea crassispatha*), planted as part of a partnership with Jardin Botanique des Cayes in Haiti. The Garden ensures the survival of this critically endangered species's genetics in our living collections.



Palms and cycads show off their foliage in the Karen and Robert Scott Florida Garden.



Gabe Leal, Educator I, and Jenny Sherer, Visitor Experience Lead

**Rehearsal time**

We write tours to be flexible because the Garden changes throughout the year. We include a wealth of details so that educators can follow their interests—and those of tour goers—while still adhering to the tour's theme and goals. Walking the path and running the script help us note all options.

All our educators are certified interpretive guides through the National Association for Interpretation. Think of them as professional storytellers.

**Data-driven drafting**

Next, we reach out to Curator of Records Sandra Rigotti-Santos. She manages millions of data points about our collections and can offer all sorts of numeric talking points.

Did you know we have 630 individual cycads—from seedlings to mature plants? Or that our palm collection now tops 3,500 palms in our nurseries, sourced from across the tropical world? See approximately 1,500 of these palms throughout the Garden.



Gabe Leal, Educator I, and Jenny Sherer, Visitor Experience Lead

With our plant list in hand, we research each species, looking for nuggets of information that might instigate an "a-ha" moment. We document everything because we want to make sure our information is verified. Our bibliography contains more than 1,600 sources.

Draft. Review. Revise. Second draft, third draft ... Each tour and program goes before many eyes and many red pens. For tours, we're looking for the most logical path, ensuring selected plants are the best fit for storytelling, and double checking all the information. Facts need to have a reason for inclusion—they must move the story forward.

**Your turn!**

From guided daily tours to air-conditioned tram tours to specialty tours—such as the Palms & Cycads tour—there's a Garden tour for all interests and ages. Scan to plan your next visit to the Garden and then meet us at Smith Entry Prow to begin your botanical adventure.



Kyle Possai, Youth & Family Program Supervisor, directs guests' collective gaze to eye-level and above during this Orchids & Epiphytes Tour.

# The Taste of Summer

By Sammy Meinders, Communications Associate



Members save 10% every day in Fogg Café.  
*Hello, summer brunch!*

Photo by John Eder

Fresh fruit is a hallmark of summertime, and in sunny Southwest Florida, that means mangos, mangos, mangos! While commonly used in sweet treats like sorbet and smoothies, mangos pair effortlessly with savory dishes, brightening color and flavor.

These Caribbean shrimp tacos are a menu-offering favorite in Fogg Café and are sure to impress at your next summer gathering.



Not all mangos are alike; learn more about mango cultivars and taste the difference at **Tasting the Tropics, June 27 & 28.**



## Caribbean Shrimp Tacos

Serving size: 3 tacos

### Ingredients

- 3 fresh corn tortillas
- 9 precooked black tiger shrimp (or other extra large shrimp)
- 1 tablespoon cooking oil
- 1 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 1 teaspoon dark chili powder
- ½ cup mango (diced)
- ¼ cup tomato (diced)
- ¼ cup onion (diced)
- 1 ½ ounces sweet chili sauce
- 1 ½ ounces mayonnaise
- Salt
- Fresh cilantro, for garnish
- Lime wedges, for garnish



### Instructions

For the shrimp: Coat shrimp with cayenne, paprika, and dark chili powder and add to pan. Add oil and sauté in pan over medium heat. Cook the shrimp until heated through. Once done, remove from heat and set aside.

### For the pico de gallo

Combine the diced mango, tomato, and onion in a bowl. Add salt to taste.

### For the sauce

In a separate bowl, stir together the sweet chili sauce and mayonnaise until combined.

### Assemble

On each tortilla, add 3 sautéed shrimp, mango pico de gallo, and a drizzle of sweet chili sauce. Garnish with fresh cilantro and a lime wedge.

### Pro tip

Make in large batches for an easy build-your-own taco bar.



Want to take this recipe out of the kitchen and into your garden?

Here's how to grow your own mangos for this dish—from seed.





# The Tropical Gardener

By Caitlyn Williams, Social Media Coordinator

**H**ow does your Garden grow? With staff-grown plants, orchids that wow, and of course, all the trappings you could need to get out and get planting.

**1. Naples Botanical Garden ACA cap: \$25**

Rep the Garden wherever you go with this sporty hat!

**2. Gardening spade, Garden by Esschert Design: \$40**

Bring your botanical vision to life.

**3. Naples Botanical Garden, A Living Canvas t-shirt: \$35**

A comfortable navy tee inspired by the Garden's latest theme.

**4. Watering can, Water in the Garden by Esschert Design: \$60**

Keep your plants happy, in style.

**5. Garden-grown plants: \$15 – \$40**

Some Garden-grown go-tos: Anthurium, Philodendrons, Plumeria and *Chlorophytum amaniense*. Species, availability, and prices vary.

**6. Orchids: \$30 – \$80**

Bring home the timeless elegance of an orchid.

**7. Kokedamas: \$60 – \$120**

Discover the beauty of kokedama, a Japanese technique featuring moss-wrapped plants.

Members save 10% every day!





# MEMBERS make our MISSION HAPPEN

Photos by John Eder



Your support helps us to connect plants and people—from our cultivated gardens to 90-acre Preserve, to nature-based solutions and conservation work across our region, to programs that inspire all ages.

Members are vital to the Garden's mission. We are so grateful to have you with us, and hope to see you regularly in *your* Garden this summer season.

## Did you know?

Members receive reciprocal benefits at more than a dozen regional gardens! And 10% off at a variety of local retail partners. Scan for details.



## Plus!

May and June only, Garden members enjoy free admission to Peace River Botanical & Sculpture Gardens in Punta Gorda.\*

\*Benefits to Naples Botanical Garden from Peace River Botanical & Sculpture Gardens: Peace River Botanical & Sculpture Gardens will offer free admission to all Naples Botanical Garden members (One named (1) adult at the Individual; up to two (2) adults at the Family level or higher with up to four (4) children under age 18) when they present a valid membership card and photo ID. This offer is valid annually for the months of May and June only. This offer applies to regular daily admission only and does not include any major fundraising events and may not be combined with any other discounts.

## Annual MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

-  Free year-round Garden admission
-  Members-only access 8 – 9am, October – May
-  Free or discounted admission to special events & exhibitions
-  Member Presale for discounted tickets to Johnsonville Night Lights in the Garden
-  Members-only programs & previews including Member Appreciation Weeks
-  10% discount\* at the Berger Shop in the Garden & Fogg Café  
\*on regularly priced items
-  Savings with partnering botanical gardens & retailers
-  Free subscription to the Garden's magazines & email updates
-  Discounted tickets for Blooms & Brews

Exhibits, tours, & more—all FREE with your membership!

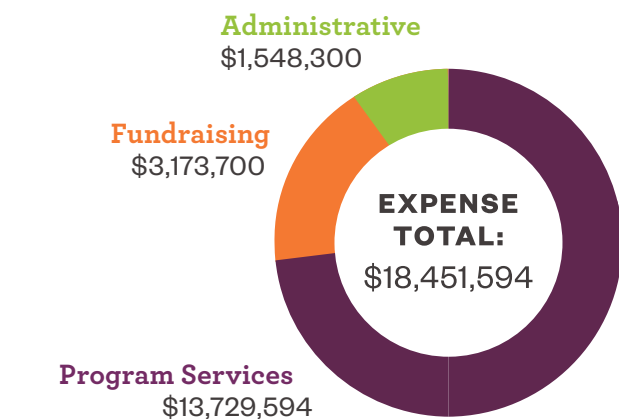
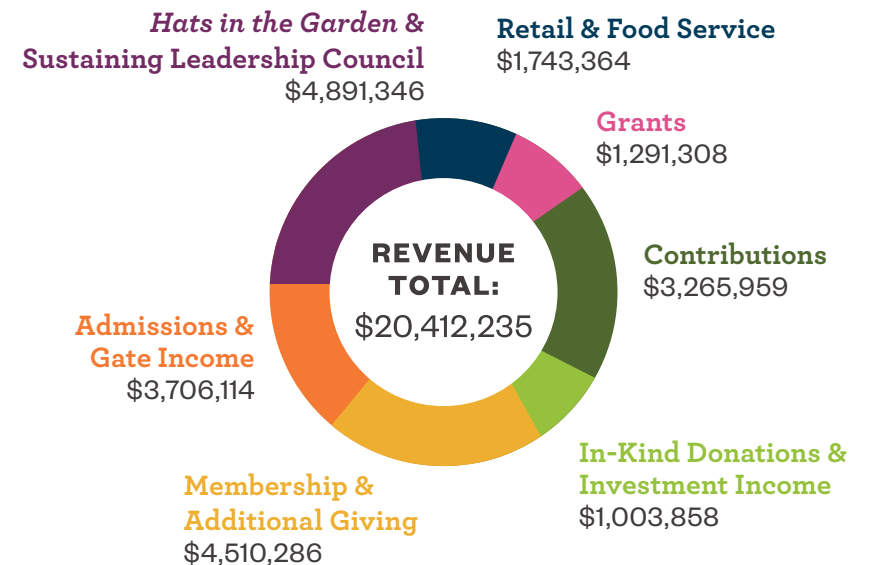


Scan for a complete list of benefits, or go online to [naplesgarden.org/membership](https://naplesgarden.org/membership).

## GIVING IMPACT

### Fiscal Year 2025 Revenue & Expenses

Thanks to your dedication and support, you help plants and people thrive—together. Your contribution makes a dramatic impact on the Garden's mission.



These figures represent audited revenue and expenses from July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025.



## Giving for Tomorrow, Today

The Leavitts, ardent supporters of the Garden, know about the beauty of childhoods entwined in nature.

By Jennifer Reed

**O**n a March morning, the first thing to catch Gil and Mary Ruth Leavitt’s attention is neither the perfect spring weather nor the Garden’s tropical plant collections (they’ll marvel at both later) but, rather, the crush of children bounding off school buses.

The Leavitts delight in seeing the students’ excitement. The couple know what’s in store—lily pads “as big as pizza pans,” armored silk floss trees stretching to the sky, orchids festooning trees.

“To see the little kids coming off the school bus, it’s wonderful. It’s just wonderful,” Gil muses.

The Leavitts, ardent supporters of the Garden, know about the beauty of childhoods entwined in

nature. In their native Illinois, they raised their two daughters and hosted their five grandchildren on an acre-sized property where they planted trees and perennials, including Mary Ruth’s beloved hostas. It contained a little pond where they taught their grandkids to fish and a garden that sprung to life each summer: tomatoes, eggplants, green beans, cucumbers, lettuce, onions, raspberries, and rhubarb.

Mary Ruth remembers inviting the grandchildren to eat straight off the vine. “They kind of looked at me,” she says. “They had no idea how those plants grew.”

The couple, fittingly, was among the early supporters of the Garden’s Nature Play initiative.

“The kids don’t play outside anymore,” says Gil, shaking his head. Nature Play uses natural elements to encourage imaginative, outdoor play. The play spaces include objects like rocks and tree trunks for climbing and found objects such as sticks, pine cones, and palm fronds for tinkering. The Leavitts concentrate much of their philanthropic giving around education, and they see Nature Play, field trips, and related endeavors as formative experiences for children.

Likewise, they embraced the Collector’s Circle—a new opportunity for donors to enhance the Garden’s core plant collections. They chose to support orchids, charismatic flowers that spark curiosity in children and adults alike.



**“Orchids are so delicate. They’re so different,” says Gil, who has learned to grow them at the couple’s Naples home. “You think, ‘Wow. Nature is really something.’”**

“Orchids are so delicate. They’re so different,” says Gil, who has learned to grow them at the couple’s Naples home. “You think, ‘Wow. Nature is really something.’”

The Leavitts became Members in 2016 and made their first significant gift in 2020 as a way of honoring Gil’s parents, who’d loved the outdoors and tended a home garden so productive that a young Gil used to peddle surplus vegetables around his neighborhood.

The couple’s philanthropic giving evolved over time. Mary Ruth and Gil each came from families rich in love but limited in financial resources. After they married, Gil attended college part-time, completing his business degree at 32. The family’s fortunes changed when Gil and a few colleagues

took a gamble, purchased the ailing company that employed them, and set it on a path to profitability.

The company flourished, and the Leavitts leveraged their success to invest in others—from their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren to the institutions nearest to their hearts, including the Garden.

“Every time you come, you see something different,” Mary Ruth says. Gil adds, “You always have a new project going on.”

Our staff’s ability to innovate depends on supporters such as the Leavitts.

“Visionary donors like Gil and Mary Ruth make it possible for the Garden to continually evolve—enhancing our extraordinary living

collections, expanding opportunities for children and families to connect with nature, and ensuring that each visit offers something new to discover,” says Rhea Merrill, Vice President and Chief Strategic & Philanthropic Officer.

The couple’s generosity also helps sustain the Garden’s core functions, such as caring for our cultivated gardens and natural areas and providing world-class educational and cultural experiences.

“Their support,” Merrill adds, “fuels both the beauty guests experience today and the long-term inspiration, learning, and stewardship that will serve future generations.”



To learn more about how you can give to the Garden, talk to your financial advisor, and then contact Rhea Merrill, Vice President & Chief Strategic and Philanthropic Officer, at [rmerrill@naplesgarden.org](mailto:rmerrill@naplesgarden.org).



*Hats in the Garden*  
 La Discothèque du Jardin  
 2026 CHAIR | ANNE SCOTT



By Jennifer Reed  
 Photos by John Eder

**T**he Event Tent darkened, and two silver disco balls sent glints of light swirling through the space. They illuminated sleek orchid centerpieces. They accentuated stunning arrangements of fronds and foliage, suspended from the ceiling. And they danced across the faces of some 650 guests, animating their headpieces.

This was *Hats in the Garden* 2026, as imagined by Chair Anne Scott, who chose the theme, *Discothèque du Jardin*, for this year's extravaganza.

*Hats* raised more than \$3.9 million to support the Garden's mission, including money designated for the Fund-a-Need, *Nature Play Chapter Two: Harmony Ever After*. Those pledges will refine and expand the Garden's Nature Play initiative, launched with support from the 2025 luncheon.

"Because of you, children will grow up with dirt on their shoes, music in their little ears, and a lifelong connection to this Garden," Scott told the crowd.



Anne Scott and Daphne Oz



The Balmain Spring 2026 Collection Runway Show, presented by Saks Fifth Avenue, captivated the crowd.

**"You get a group of women together, and they are going to make things happen."**

**—Mary Stone**

The power of Scott's leadership and women's philanthropy was on full display, spurred by Emmy-winning television host and New York Times best-selling author Daphne Oz, who rallied the crowd to support the Fund-a-Need. "You get a group of women together, and they are going to make things happen," noted Mary Stone, a member of the Garden's Board of Directors, celebrating her 10th *Hats* with friends and family.



Hats attendees were fashion models in their own right. Mariah Bird of Naples donned a feathered headpiece by Los Angeles-based hatmaker Arturo Rios—a playful pairing with her surname. “I love a good theme,” gushed Cathy Lubner, wearing a pink, white, and black gown by Greta Constantine, and a custom-designed hat accented with a silver disco ball. Katrina Lundmark-Kash created her own couture, transforming a simple black shift dress into a botanical homage. “Art, painting, and flowers. Those are my three favorite things in life,” she said. “I had so much fun making it.”



Marnette Perry

Throughout the event, love for the Garden was as prominent as the hats. “I’m here because of what it does for the community,” Marnette Perry, in a striking, pink-swirled headpiece, said of the soiree. Her friend, Libby Harshfield added, “In Naples, we believe in preserving what’s precious to the environment and community. That’s what the Garden does.”



Olga DeCaprio, Mariah Bird, and Cathy Lubner



Katrina Lundmark-Kash



Some attendees embraced the “more is more” vibrancy of the 1970s, adorned with glitter and fringe.



Hats in the Garden is underwritten, in part, by the Sustaining Leadership Council, a group of more than 45 ambassadors who champion the Garden’s mission.



**When you give to the Garden,  
you're funding a future  
*blooming with possibilities.***

The generosity of our supporters fuels crucial work in conservation, horticulture, and education, extending the Garden's impact far beyond our 170 acres.



Scan or visit [napesgarden.org](http://napesgarden.org)  
for ways to give.

*Every gift supports the Garden's conservation mission.*



*Karen and Robert Scott Florida Garden*



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or share with a friend!



# We're growing like the Garden



Now, we're ready to grow with you. Call Bob 239-264-1000

Robert T. Edwards. CEO, Chief Investment Officer, Senior PIM® Portfolio Manager  
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