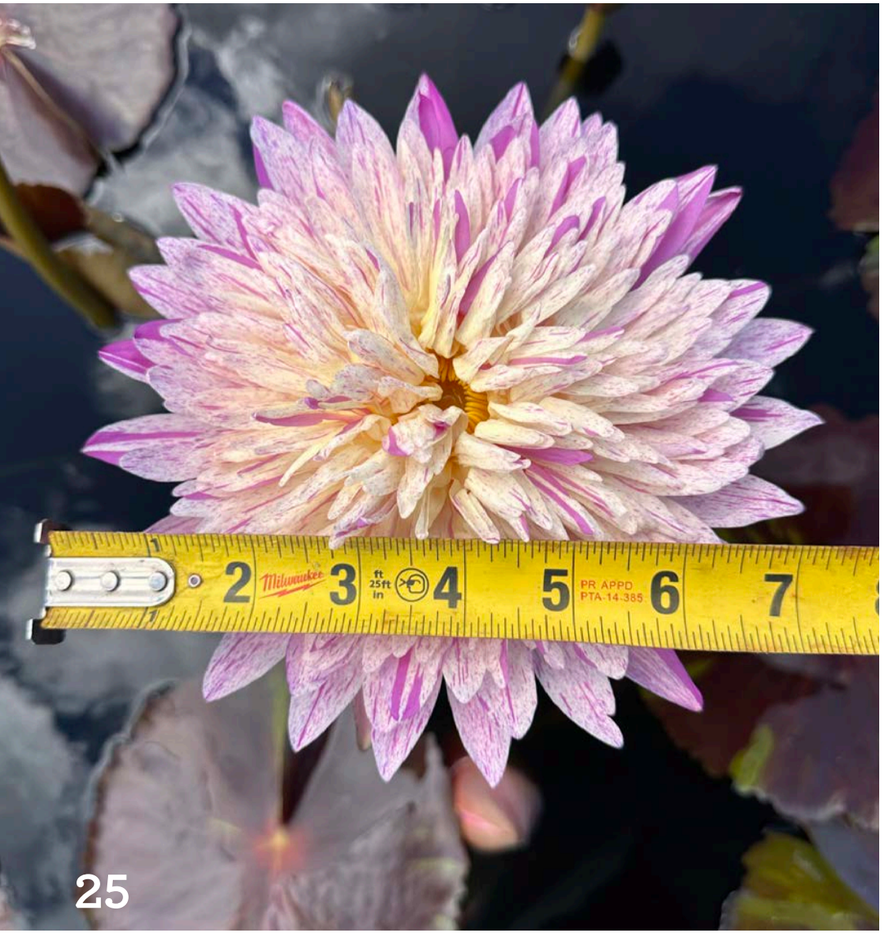
NAPLES BOTANICAL GARDEN

Cultivate



FALL 2026

All is merry and bright at Johnsonville Night Lights in the Garden. The illuminated Hoffmann Lawn sparkles with yuletide cheer, while a festive bromeliad tree—decked in trademark tillandsia trimmings—puts a tropical spin on the season. Buy your discounted Member tickets now! Flip to the season calendar (inset) for more. Photo by John Eder.



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CULTIVATE FALL 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
Amelia Clark, Aquatic Areas Gardener 3, clears algae and plant material from the Water Garden on a July morning. Turn to pages 25 and 31 to learn more about the plants that thrive in their watery world—and those who venture in to care for them.

Photo by John Eder.

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An explosion of color abounds as Danza Azteca Guadalupana takes to the Water Garden stage during the Garden's 2025 Día de los Muertos Celebration. Photo by John Eder.



Bromeliad, *Neoregalia* spp.

Dear Garden Members and Friends,

This fall marks an exciting new chapter for Naples Botanical Garden, and I am grateful for the opportunity to share it with you.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I want to express our sincere appreciation to Carl Crosetto, Interim President & CEO, and Britt Patterson-Weber, Interim Deputy CEO, and current Vice President of Education & Interpretation, for their leadership and service to the Garden during this important period of transition. Their steady commitment ensured that the Garden continued moving forward while we undertook the important work of identifying our next leader.

We are delighted to welcome Dr. Emily Coffey as President & CEO of the Garden. Emily joins us at a pivotal point in the Garden's evolution, with tremendous momentum behind us and an ambitious future ahead. She brings vast experience in plant conservation and science, a collaborative



approach to leadership, and a strong commitment to connecting people with the natural world. These strengths align especially well with the Garden we are becoming—one that continues to advance horticultural excellence while deepening our impact in plant conservation, education, and the stewardship and restoration of our natural areas. Emily brings an important perspective to this next chapter, and we are excited to welcome her leadership as the Garden continues to grow.

That strong foundation exists because of you.

Our Members, Donors, community sponsors, volunteers, and friends have supported the Garden through remarkable growth and change. Your annual support sustains far more than what visitors see during a day in the Garden. It provides the people, expertise, and resources required to care for our gardens and natural areas, advance plant conservation, educate learners of all ages, and welcome our community year after year. It also gives the Garden the strength to plan thoughtfully and confidently for the future.

We begin this next chapter with tremendous gratitude for the community that has made the Garden what it is today. On behalf of the Board, thank you for your continued belief in the Garden and in the important work we accomplish together.

Warmly,

Cathy Funderburg

Chair, Board of Directors
Naples Botanical Garden

Questions and letters to the editor may be sent to email@naplesgarden.org.

Yesterday, Today & Tomorrow

By Caitlyn Williams, Social Media Coordinator

Did you know?

While all plants have one distinct scientific name, they may have myriad common names, so don't be surprised if you know these specimens by another moniker.

Yesterday, today, and tomorrow (*Brunfelsia pauciflora*) reminds us that change is one of nature's most ephemeral displays. Native to Brazil, this shrub appears to tell time through its flowers. Fresh blooms emerge a rich violet-purple, gradually fading to lavender and then pure white over the course of several days. With all three colors often appearing on the plant at once, it's easy to see how this tropical favorite earned its memorable name.

A member of the nightshade family, yesterday, today, and tomorrow is prized for both its aesthetics and fragrance. The sweet scent of its blooms is especially noticeable in the evening, bringing dynamism to the landscape by day, and adding to the magic of evenings spent in the Garden. Though the flowers may appear delicate, this evergreen shrub is well-suited to South Florida gardens, where it provides color through much of the year and shows us beauty is found at every stage of change.



The Pandanus Circle in the Kapnick Brazilian Garden, home to *Brunfelsia pauciflora*, sparkles during Johnsonville Night Lights in the Garden. Photo by John Eder.

WHERE
Pandanus Circle,
Kapnick Brazilian Garden

WHEN
Blooms heavily in spring, continuing intermittently through summer and fall.

All in Good Time

Keep an eye out for these fall-blooming plants that also feature the concept of time in their common names.



Clock vine (*Thunbergia grandiflora*)
Fall to spring

Where to find it:
Kapnick Caribbean Garden



Bush clock vine (*Thunbergia erecta*)
Late spring to fall

Where to find it:
Pandaus Circle walkway

What's That Green Fruit?

The curious case of the calabash

By Caitlyn Williams, Social Media Coordinator

Visit during Johnsonville Night Lights in the Garden, November 27, 2026 – January 3, 2027, to see this fruiting tree in a different light! See seasonal calendar for more.

The calabash tree *(Crescentia cujete)* is a standout in both the LaGrippe Orchid Garden and the Kathleen and Scott Kapnick Brazilian Garden. Large, round fruits develop along the tree's main trunk and primary branches, a growth habit known as cauliflory. This gives the tree a whimsical appearance that often sparks curiosity among Garden visitors. While the green, gourd-like fruits may resemble oversized ornaments, they have served practical purposes throughout the tropics for centuries.

Native to Central and South America, the calabash tree produces a hard-shelled fruit. Once the pulp is removed and the shell is dried, this durable crop can be crafted into bowls, cups, utensils, and musical instruments, the likes of which can be found—and heard—during W.O.N.D.E.R. programming (see the season calendar for days and times). The tree's blooms are fleeting, often opening as evening falls to attract bats, moths, and other nighttime pollinators.

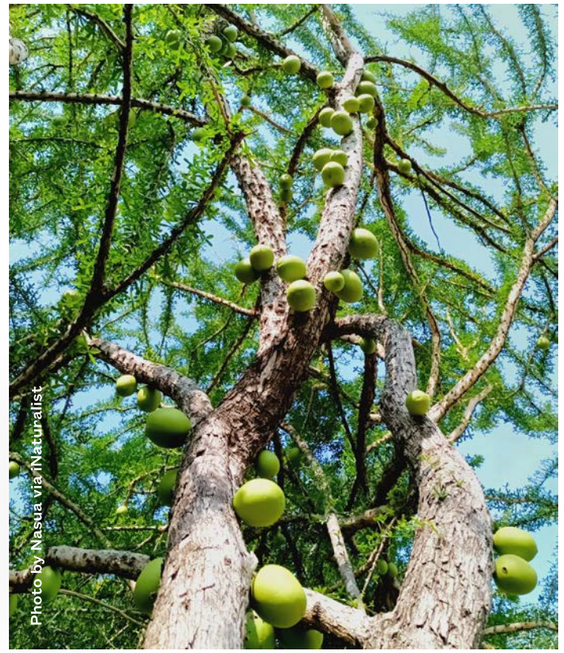


Photo by Nasua via iNaturalist

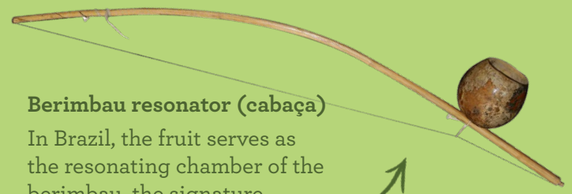
The Music of the Calabash



Maracas
Widely used throughout the Caribbean and Latin America.

Güiro
A traditional Caribbean scraper instrument created by carving ridges into the fruit's shell.





Berimbau resonator (cabaça)
In Brazil, the fruit serves as the resonating chamber of the berimbau, the signature instrument of capoeira (Afro-Brazilian martial arts).



Photo by John Eder

Discover güiros, gourd rattles, and natural instruments galore during W.O.N.D.E.R in the Garden!



Staff and volunteers place hundreds of trees and palms on this tongue of land situated along the Garden's lakeside trail in early May 2026. Photos by John Eder.

What's Happening

Out-of-the-greenhouse thinking translates to new visitor experience

Venture out onto the Garden's lakeside trails, and you'll notice some changes along the horizon. Hundreds of palms, and hundreds more trees, situated along a swath of land dubbed "the island" by Garden staff.

"It's a little reward for guests who venture out there, to see tropical plants and flowering trees they wouldn't normally see in their neighborhood," says Lindsay McCoy, Horticulture Maintenance Supervisor, who coordinated the planting efforts in spring 2026.

While the plants brighten the landscape, this spot won't be their permanent home. Rather, McCoy likens it to a live holding space, a place for the plants to grow and mature until they are relocated to a different spot in the Garden. Some will replace older trees or fill gaps in the canopy after storms. They all will provide vital data on how these unique tropical plants—not ones you can find at your average Southwest Florida gardening center—grow in the ground instead of in pots.



"Getting trees out of their pots and into the ground actually helps the tree live a better life," says McCoy. "We have this amazing nursery space with the Evenstad Horticulture Campus, and this is thinking outside the box." It's also maximizing nursery space for the juvenile trees that still need to remain in pots at the 60,000 square-foot horticulture campus.

Special thanks to the group volunteers from Deloitte and the Men's Cultural Alliance who planted these trees and palms. **Looking for ways to give back as a group?** Contact Karen Pattison, Volunteer Services Manager, at kpattison@naplesgarden.org.



Cascade bells



Summer Intern Jacob Holcombe (left) and Conservation Associate Jonathan Farquhar

Music to Our Ears

Make music while you play during your next Garden visit! Discover stately instruments beckoning to be explored; look for them in Palm Hop and Wonder Circle. Cascading bells, the Griffin, and Titan Tines produce warm, rich tones with resonating power. Beautiful sounds abound, whether you're playing a favorite melody or inventing your own rhythm.

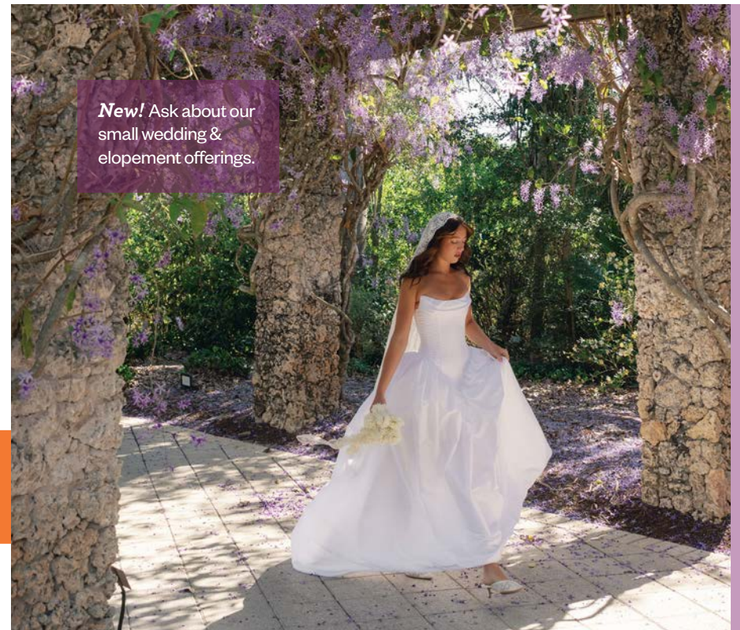
Have young children in tow? Families, join us for W.O.N.D.E.R., Friday – Monday, 10am – 12pm, to make music together with some of nature's oldest instruments: rain sticks, gourd rattles, and more!

Conserve 2026 is Here

The 2026 issue of *Conserve* is chock full of stories about how the Garden protects plants—in many instances, one seed bank deposit at a time.

See how we're seeding the future of Southwest Florida's plants.





New! Ask about our small wedding & elopement offerings.

Venue with a View

Celebrate your next milestone or gathering surrounded by a kaleidoscope of tropical blooms and the sound of the wind through the palms.

The immersive vistas at Naples Botanical Garden are the event backdrop you'll never forget. Offering bridal showers, corporate events, cocktail hours, and more.

Photo by Miller's Photo + Film, millersphotoandfilm.com



Step right up: Clay Van Kuiken, Educator I, invites you to spin to learn.

Dig a little deeper

By Sammy Meinders, Communications Associate

When walking the Garden, it's common for the unique, tropical surroundings to pique our curiosity: *What is that plant growing on a tree? Coffee comes from this?* Or the ever-popular *Should I use ice to water my orchid?* If you have questions like these, you're not alone. That's where Dig Deeper comes in.

Dig Deeper is a drop-in program designed to shift your attention away from the curated landscapes and into the outdoor classroom. Using props, games, or a show-and-tell style approach, Garden educators invite you to explore your curiosity, get answers to your burning questions—*What is a prescribed fire?*—and walk away with a renewed connection to the Garden and tropical world.

Topics rotate daily, so be sure to stop by Dig Deeper every Garden visit. Programs occur twice daily, at 11am and 1pm. Just look for the Dig Deeper cart!

Dig into something new each visit

- Staff-led discussions **every day**—if the Garden is open, the Dig Deeper cart is out!
- **30+** rotating themes
- **~5,000** guest interactions annually

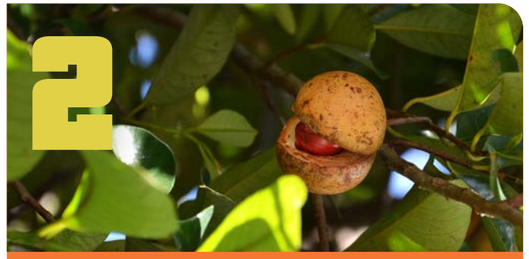
the Spice is Right

Read the clues to guess the spices; then discover these plants' locations in the Garden.



1

You grind this table spice to put in a variety of dishes.



2

This spice is often associated with fall and winter because of its distinct fragrance with a warm, slightly sweet taste.



3

We often sip a bubbly drink flavored with this spice to help ease nausea or motion sickness.



4

This spice is one of the most popular flavorings in the world and its seeds can often be found in a favorite ice cream.

1. Black pepper (*Piper nigrum*); Lea Asian Garden 2. Nutmeg (*Myristica fragrans*); Irma's Garden 3. Ginger (*Zingiber officinale*); Lea Asian Garden 4. Vanilla (*Vanilla planifolia*); Kapnick Caribbean Garden

? Test more of your botanical know-how during "The Spice is Right" Dig Deeper.



Photos by John Eder





Behind Every Garden Visit

Fourteen years in, Operations Manager Ralph Klebosis has evolved as much as the property he tends



Ralph Klebosis is entering the next chapter in his Garden career. After 14 years, five roles, and a third of his life spent working with the Garden, he's parlaying lessons learned from physical, boots-on-the-ground work into tools his team can use. The end result: an immersive Garden experience for Members, time and time again. A background in industrial organizational psychology and more recently, Six Sigma and lean process certifications, equip him to empower his team, comprising 15 staff members in Operations, Facilities, and Maintenance.

Q: How does your team work together behind the scenes to create that memorable experience when someone walks on-site?

A: When you said behind the scenes, that really sums it up. It is very multifaceted; I call it a catch-all group. They can do projects; we have some staff who can build anything. They can do crowd control. They can do first aid. They have property expertise—our staff is knowledgeable of the infrastructure, power, location, and capacity of what can the Garden handle—and they can facilitate that.

Q: What's most important in the work you all do?

A: Flexibility—and being able to adjust priorities. You may not see the work being done because it's back of house, but you'll always notice if it hasn't been completed.

Q: What has changed the most during your 14 years here?

A: Processes for our Operations Department have moved from fixing problems that arise to preventing them in the first place. That's been a long-term goal. So even though it's still hundreds of hours of projects a month, year-round, it's data driven.

Q: How has your role here changed?

A: You know, I went from a maintenance technician to an operations lead to the event and production manager to the operations manager and now senior manager of operations. It's been steady career progression. These 14 years have gone by pretty quick.

Q: You have been a key figure behind the scenes for Johnsonville Night Lights in the Garden for over a decade—what do you most appreciate about how it is received by audiences?

A: The team and me, we're on property a lot for Night Lights. So, we hear it from the tens of thousands of people who come to this event, saying that they've never been here before—and that they are coming back again. I appreciate how this one seasonal event works as its own way to reach new audiences.



Above: Operations, Facilities, and Maintenance help create the magic of Johnsonville Night Lights in the Garden each winter. See seasonal calendar for more. Opposite: Ralph Klebosis, bottom left, oversees a multi-faceted team that can fabricate and install Garden-curated exhibitions, among myriad roles.

Hacks for SWFL Gardeners

How to plant in sandy soil

Southwest Florida soil is composed almost exclusively of one thing: sand. This is conducive for people who feel revitalized by the sea, but not quite so nourishing for plants. Coaxing the best out of our plants requires a few tips and tricks.

About Florida's Sandy Soil

What's good about it

- High calcium levels help strengthen cell walls and roots systems
- Excellent drainage and aeration
- Easier to dig compared to compact soil, such as clay

What's bad about it

- Low water retention
- High soil pH makes it harder to grow certain varieties of plants
- High salt content and low organic matter, especially toward the coast

How to Plant in It



Maintain moisture

Mulch after you plant. This helps reduce surface evaporation associated with sand.



Water

Water frequently and deeply. This encourages root growth—especially important to anchor plants in place in sandy soil.



Feed your plantings

The high calcium and pH levels of our sandy soils tend to lock out important micronutrients. To combat this, try fertilizers high in iron and magnesium. Opt for slow-release varieties; water-soluble options will leach nutrients right through the sand.



Consider compost

Adding composted materials when amending your soil will help improve organic matter, as this is usually lacking in sandy soils.

Plants that Thrive in Southwest Florida's Sandy Soil







Photo by Nadia Luisa Islas Madrid, iNaturalist





Photo by littlejam, iNaturalist







Barbados cherry (*Malphigia emarginata*); Bromeliads (*Alcantarea* sp., *Aechmeia blanchetiana*, and hybrids); Buccaneer palm (*Pseudophoenix sargentii*); Cocoplum (*Chrysobalanus icaco*); Florida thatch palm (*Thrinax radiata*); Mango (*Mangifera indica*); Key thatch palm (*Leucothrinax morrisii*); Silk floss tree (*Ceiba speciosa*)



Meet the Staff Expert

Daniel Czahor,
Nursery Operations Manager

Soil Know-How & Career Stats

Specializes in soil science and nursery production; Master's in horticultural science from Texas Tech University; former contractor for The Villages Grown, a 100,000 square-foot greenhouse operation where he helped formulate their fertilizer solution.

Czahor started with the Garden this summer, and here, he breaks down what we need to know about planting sturdy, solid plants in our ever-shifting soil.



Daniel's Go-To Sandy Soil Plant

"I'm a big fan of key limes. They're wonderful down here; there's nothing better than making a key lime pie from your own limes."

Tiger orchid (*Grammatophyllum speciosum*)

Living Rarities

Meet some of the "red-listed" plants at the heart of the Garden's design and conservation work

By Julia Van Fleet, Educator I

Walk through Naples Botanical Garden, and you may notice small red tags that dot the landscape. These tags identify species that are threatened, endangered, or otherwise at risk in the wild.

They also represent two of the Garden's most important goals: creating beautiful, world-class landscapes and helping conserve plant diversity for future generations. Plants determined to be at risk in the wild face pressures ranging from sea-level rise to shifts in weather conditions to habitat loss to overexploitation. These plants have been assessed by organizations such as the International Union for Conservation of Nature, which examine factors such as population size, range, and rate of decline to determine which face extinction. In the Garden's collection, approximately 5,500 accessioned plants, and 280 taxa (this includes both on display and in nurseries), are red-listed.

For the Horticulture Team, red-tagged plants have an especially high bar to meet before joining the Garden's collection. They may be among the most imperiled in the world, but being threatened is not enough. Like every accessioned plant, they must contribute beauty, character, ecological value, or a compelling story that enriches the visitor experience, according to Brian Galligan, Vice President of Horticulture. We look to conserve these plants for a host of reasons; an added benefit is what they bring to the Garden's landscapes in the process. The result is a collection where horticultural excellence and conservation work hand in hand.

For Nick Ewy, Brian Holley Curator of Living Collections, imperiled plants also offer something many landscapes cannot.

"Why would we plant something common when we can showcase a species that people might never see



Photo by John Eder

anywhere else?" he says.

A visitor may recognize a baobab *(Adansonia grandidieri)* from a trip to Africa or be thrilled to encounter a plant they have only seen in books or movies ("The Lion King!"). Others may discover a species for the very first time. Either way, these plants create opportunities for curiosity, connection, and learning.

They also help define what it means to be a world-class botanical garden.

Unlike traditional landscapes that rely on a relatively small selection of familiar plants, the Garden continually seeks new species to add depth, diversity, and meaning to its collections.

One of Galligan's favorite examples is lignum vitae (*Guaiacum sanctum*), a threatened tree native to





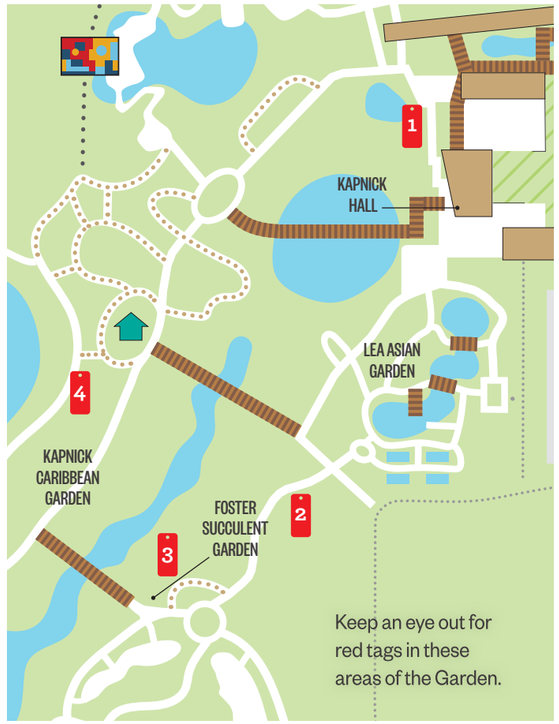
South Florida and the Caribbean. The species offers striking blue flowers (relatively rare in nature), a unique branching structure, exfoliating bark, wildlife value, and adaptability to local growing conditions.

"The more of those boxes it checks, the more we really want to have it in the landscape," Galligan says. Adding new species, red-listed or not, also allows the team to better understand which plants will thrive in Southwest Florida's soil and climatic conditions, making our grounds a living horticultural laboratory. Our findings could inspire landscapers to expand their plant palettes, adding biodiversity and visual appeal to planted spaces.

In fact, cultivation itself has helped keep some at-risk species alive, Galligan and Ewy explain. Botanical gardens nurture plants that are disappearing in the wild. In late September, for example, Montgomery Botanical Center in Coral Gables sent our horticulturists home with a truckload of plants, including the critically endangered *Attalea crassispatha* palm from Haiti and the *Coccothrinax fragrans*, an endangered palm native to Hispaniola and Cuba.

Similarly, horticulturists sometimes introduce disappearing species into the nursery trade to bolster its populations—and add flair to landscape design. Such is the case with the spindle palm (*Hyophorbe verschaffeltii*) and the red latan palm (*Latania lontaroides*), which is endangered in the wild but appealing to nursery growers for its reddish hue and striking shape, similar to a Bismarck palm.

Simply planting rare specimens isn't enough to guarantee their survival. These red-tagged plants receive special attention throughout their lives in the Garden. From the moment a plant arrives, horticulturists carefully consider where it will be planted, how it will be maintained, and how it can contribute to the collection over the long term.



During hurricanes, cold events, or other emergencies, these plants frequently become priorities. The Garden's plant records database helps staff identify which plants require immediate attention and ensure valuable genetic material is protected.

Genetic diversity is another essential part of plant conservation. As Ewy explains, botanical gardens don't just aim to grow more plants—they work to preserve as much genetic diversity as possible so rare species remain resilient into the

Continued on page 24

Some of our favorites include:



Guaiacum sanctum Lignum vitae demonstrates how conservation value and horticultural excellence can work together in a single plant. Its blue flowers, distinctive structure, and wildlife benefits make it one of the Garden's standout trees.

1 **WHERE**
In front of Kapnick Hall, Chabraja Visitor Center



Tahina palm *(Tahina spectabilis),* is one of the rarest palms in the world. Native to northwestern Madagascar, it was discovered in 2007 by a local farmer who noticed it on his land. He named it after his daughter, Anne-Tahina Metz. With fewer than 40 mature individuals left in the wild, it is considered one of the most significant botanical finds of recent decades.

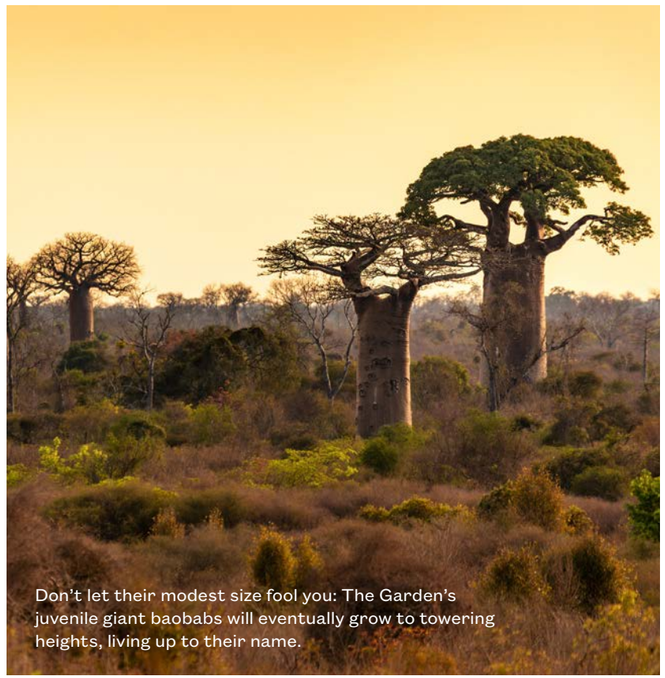
2 **WHERE**
Between Foster Succulent & Lea Asian gardens




Photo by John Eder

Grandidier's baobabs (*Adansonia grandidieri*) – Among the most recognizable red-tagged plants in the Garden, these are native to Madagascar and known for their massive trunks and distinctive silhouettes. Their shape and remarkable ability to store water when they reach full size (up to 32,000 gallons!) make them a plant you don't want to miss.

3 **WHERE**
Foster Succulent Garden


Don't let their modest size fool you: The Garden's juvenile giant baobabs will eventually grow to towering heights, living up to their name.



Microcycas calocoma, a Cuban cycad, considered one of the rarest in the world. This ancient species represents a lineage that existed long before dinosaurs disappeared from Earth and serves as a reminder of the importance of protecting evolutionary history.

4 **WHERE** Kapnick Caribbean Garden, near the Pastore Family Caribbean House

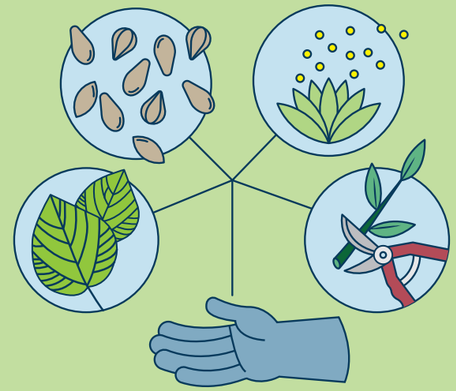
future. This often means sharing seeds, pollen, and propagation material among institutions to strengthen living collections.

In one unique case, the tiger orchid (*Grammatophyllum speciosum*) provides a perfect example. Although not on the IUCN Red List (they haven't been assessed) tiger orchids are extinct in Singapore and their wild habitats elsewhere face threats such as development. Their populations are bolstered by orchid enthusiasts, botanical gardens, and other institutions. When the Garden's tiger orchid flowered, Ewy worked with colleagues at Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden in Miami, which provided pollen for cross-pollination. The resulting seedlings represent new genetic combinations that can eventually be shared with other institutions, creating additional safeguards for the species.

Visitors can see this conservation story play out by watching for red-tagged plants throughout the Garden.

The next time you notice a red tag, take a closer look. Behind each one is a story of collaboration, careful stewardship, and hope. These plants are not only beautiful additions to the landscape, but they are part of a global effort to preserve biodiversity, expand our understanding of plants, and ensure that future generations have the opportunity to experience them.

Sharing for Survival



Modern botanical gardens recognize that no single institution can preserve a species alone. Instead, gardens share plants, seeds, pollen, cuttings, and expertise to build collections that are stronger together than they would be individually. These exchanges strengthen living collections and increase genetic diversity.

2025

900 pieces
of plant material donated by Naples Botanical Garden

3,200 pieces
of plant material received by Naples Botanical Garden

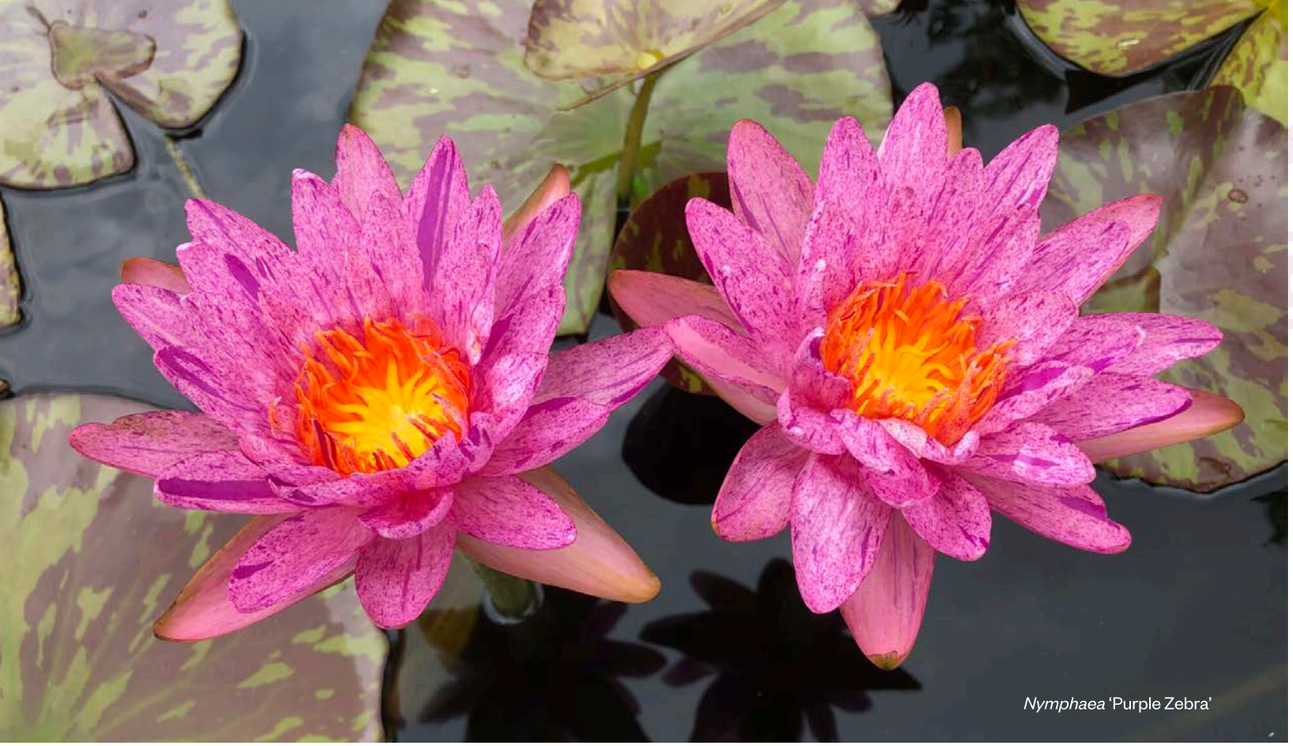
Where Waterlilies Make Their Debut

Before the world knows their names, the newest waterlilies bloom here first. And for many, the Garden becomes home.

By Matt Herrman, Curator of Special Collections

Waterlilies have always enchanted humans. Across many cultures, *Nymphaea* sp.—named for Greek mythological water nymphs—are deeply symbolic, representing traits such as beauty and enlightenment. Historically, the plants themselves were somewhat simplistic and austere. The waterlilies depicted by the ancient Egyptians were elegant, but predictable in their appearance, a flower with a dozen or so pale blue petals and plain green pads.

Nymphaea 'Coral Sky'



Nymphaea 'Purple Zebra'

In the past 15 years, hybridizers have spurred an aquatic renaissance, producing new colors, forms, and increased petal counts in these first-of-their-kind waterlily hybrids. Beautiful-but-simple pink and blue tropical waterlily flowers have given way to deep maroons and saturated purples that look more like chrysanthemums than waterlilies. In 2009, a hybridizer crossed a tropical and a hardy-type waterlily and achieved a long-coveted blue-purple hardy specimen. This breakthrough led to the development of an entirely new class of waterlily, the Hardy Intersubgeneric (HISG), which possesses the growth habit and cold tolerance of hardy waterlilies combined with the flower colors and shapes of tropicals.

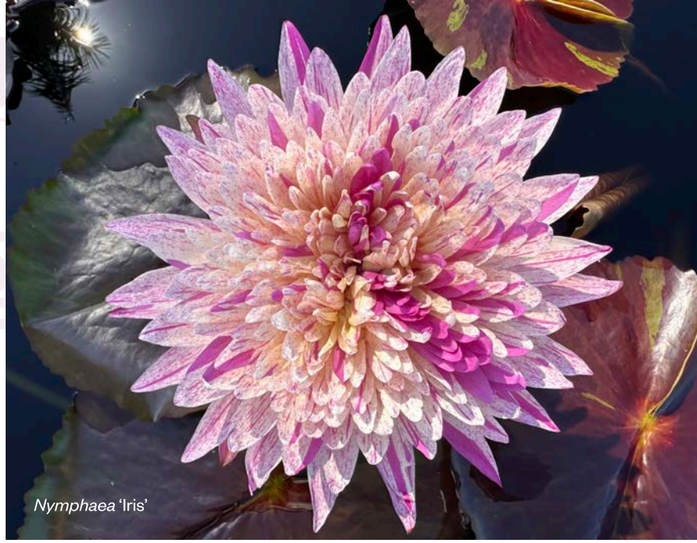
Our Garden is at the center of this revolution. Since 2019, we have been one of the host sites and growers of the International Waterlily and Water Gardening Society's (IWGS) New Waterlily Competition. The first competition in 1997 offered a way for waterlily hybridizers to showcase their creations and to introduce remarkable new hybrids to water garden enthusiasts worldwide. Luckily for us, many donate their plants to the Garden after the competition, giving our guests an opportunity to see the world's most innovative waterlilies.



Matt Herrman, Curator of Special Collections. Photo by John Eder.

Our holdings include the 2021 winner, *Nymphaea* 'Purple Zebra' by hybridizer Pornchai Sukkasemsamranjit of Thailand. This plant set itself apart with its light lavender flowers flecked with splashes of dark purple and white streaks surrounding the fiery yellow anthers and central disc. The judges also rate the pads of the entries, and 'Purple Zebra' has marvelous maroon mottling, making every leaf unique. The overall winner in 2024, *Nymphaea* 'Dreaming Beans' by Li Xiao of China, came from the miniature category. 'Dreaming Beans' produces an abundance of vibrant pink flowers that measure less than 3 inches across. This dainty hybrid is the perfect hardy waterlily to grow in smaller spaces or containers throughout the Garden. In 2025, *Nymphaea* 'Prueksakan' by Arun Kobkaew of Thailand won the competition. This stunning hybrid features a deep royal purple flower with hundreds of densely packed petals. These intensely colored, chrysanthemum-like flowers are set atop a backdrop of burgundy mottled pads that make a bold statement in the pond.

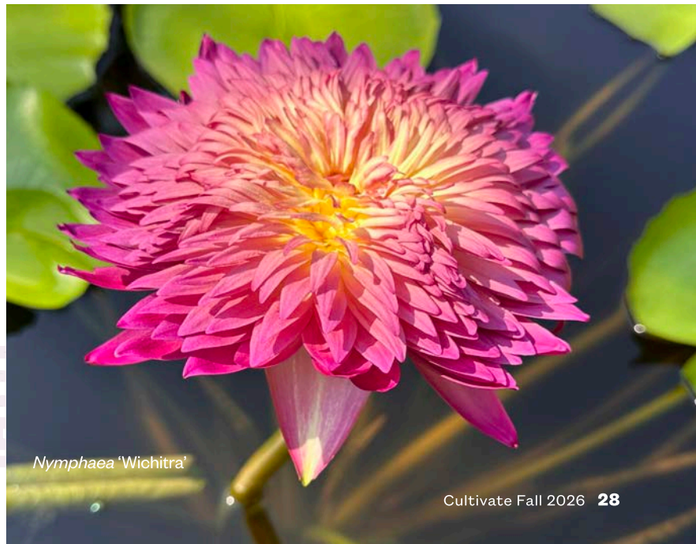
At any given time, dozens of award winners and competitors past or present are on display in our water gardens. Our waterlily collection overall consists of about 20 wild species and 150 cultivated varieties, ranging from the world's biggest, the *Victoria*, to the smallest, *Nymphaea thermarum*.



Nymphaea 'Iris'



Nymphaea 'Prueksakan'



Nymphaea 'Wichitra'



Nymphaea 'Dreaming Beans'

What Makes a Winning Waterlily?

Over the course of eight weeks, the host sites and growers collect data to share with the judges.

Flower frequency
Average number of blossoms a week

Measurements
Blossoms, lily pads, and plant width

Bloom timing
When the flowers open and close

Vigor
Number of growing points at the end of the season

Waterlilies are scored on a weighted scale in four categories.

50% Blossom	15% Lily pads
20% Originality	15% Overall


Nymphaea 'Foi Thong'
by Korakott Pumpetch (Thailand)


Nymphaea 'Tubtimchon'
by Rajamangala Institute (Thailand)


Nymphaea 'A. Tongkam'
by Pairote Thongnum (Thailand)


Nymphaea 'Ravissada'
by Kanyaporn Inngam (Thailand)


Nymphaea 'Painted Pom Pom'
by Tony Moore (USA)


Nymphaea 'Sunny Doll'
by Neng Xiang You (Taiwan)

As you read this, we're at the tail end of the 2026 New Waterlily Competition. As the host, waterlily hybridizers from around the world send their latest and greatest creations to the Garden to be grown out under the care of our horticulture staff. Once the plants are full sized and blooming, we record detailed observations, measurements, and photographs. These data document the first-, second-, and third-day flowers of each plant, as many waterlilies exhibit subtle changes as they open each successive day. Other data recorded includes the flower measurements, height, overall size of the plants, and the number of new flowers produced each week. We monitor them for eight weeks.

After the observation period is complete, we compile the data and photos and forward them to the IWGS, where a panel of expert judges will score the entries. The IWGS compiles the scores and declares the Best Overall New Waterlily, as well as honoring winners in Tropical, Hardy, and Hardy Intersubgeneric Waterlily categories.

Hosting this competition is a significant undertaking for Garden staff, requiring rigorous recordkeeping and correspondence with contestants and IWGS administrators—all the while maintaining our existing aquatic plant collection and nearly 2 acres of aquatic gardens. But the endeavor is worth it. Like their predecessors, nearly all of this year's contestants have pledged to donate their entries to the Garden, giving our collection another infusion of aquatic gems to enjoy.

Can't get enough of these charismatic plants?

Learn more about how one Member and volunteer supports the Garden's waterlilies, page 31, and what you can do to make an impact on this vital collection: page 33.

Time, Talent & Treasure

Volunteer and donor Rick Hart shares why his dedication to the Garden is more than just knee deep

By Jennifer Reed
Photos by John Eder



Twice a week, Rick Hart dons a floppy sun hat, pulls on a pair of waders, and slips into the Garden's water features.

In the quiet pools, worrisome headlines vanish, troubles slip away, and Rick takes in his surroundings with the same sense of awe he experienced when he first became involved with our organization, some 13 years ago. He marvels at how each landscape transports him to a different place—to Asia, to Brazil, to an idealized Florida, awash in plants and devoid of development.

"All of them are my favorites!" he insists. "Each one is so different."

He's working to sustain these landscapes in every way he can—as volunteer, as donor, and as informal guide, helping guests get the most out of their Garden experience. One recent morning, he noticed a couple preparing to photograph the Water Garden. Rick, who knows our aquatic spaces intimately, suggested they shift their position. "If you go right over there, you can get a better angle," he told them. "It'll look like a Monet, and you can blow it up and put it in a frame, and you'll save tens of millions of dollars not having to buy the real deal."

The couple laughed. Then they moved to the spot Rick indicated.

What keeps him giving—and gardening—is sharing his love of the Garden with the tens of thousands of guests who see his handiwork each year.

Rick followed his parents to Florida. Fleeing New England's cold, they picked Naples because it was just about as far south as they could go without crossing Alligator Alley and heading to the Keys. Rick visited often, and when he was ready to move from Connecticut, he handed his ice scraper and snow shovel to a neighbor and never looked back.

He and his late wife had tended an extensive garden back home, brimming with flowers. When he downsized to a condo in Naples, he knew he needed another way to connect with nature. His parents had been early Garden Members, and when Rick visited himself, he knew he found his place and his people. He started out as a weekend volunteer and then became more entrenched,



particularly after the devastation of Hurricane Irma in 2017. He was among the first to answer the Garden's call for help.

From his earliest days, Rick knew he wanted to contribute financially to the Garden, too. Once he was in a position to do so, he joined our Royal Palm Society. Giving levels range from $2,000 – $15,000, and those sustaining memberships fuel day-to-day operations.

"These are gifts we count on annually. They pay salaries. They fix the water features when the pump goes down or we have an emergency need," says Rhea Merrill, Vice President & Chief Strategic and Philanthropic Officer. "A lot of people don't understand that those gifts are our bread and butter for keeping the doors open."

Rick is now working with Rhea to find a way to contribute to the long-term upkeep of our aquatic plant collection, one of the Garden's defining features (see page 33). With nearly 2 acres of aquatic displays, the Garden is one of a handful of places in the United States where people can see waterlilies, lotuses, and related plants year-round in a natural setting.

What keeps him giving—and gardening—is sharing his love of the Garden with the tens of thousands of guests who see his handiwork each year.

"Most of them come back," Rick says, "because they found out what paradise is, right here in Naples Botanical Garden."

Your passion. Our collections.
A lasting impact.

Every visit to Naples Botanical Garden is shaped by the extraordinary: towering tropical trees, dazzling orchids, tranquil waterlilies, and lush foliage—philodendrons, crotons, bromeliads, gingers—that give dimension and depth to the landscape.

Each plant collection tells a story of beauty, biodiversity, and conservation. These remarkable plants are not static displays—they are living collections requiring expert care, thoughtful curation, and continual investment to flourish.

The Collector's Circle invites the Garden's most passionate supporters to play a direct role in sustaining these botanical treasures. Through annual gifts of $25,000 – $100,000, members champion the living collections while advancing horticultural excellence, plant conservation, and environmental education.

In addition to exclusive behind-the-scenes experiences and special gatherings with our experts, Collector's Circle members enjoy a unique opportunity to help shape the Garden's future. Each year, members are invited to vote on a signature horticultural display, as well as participate in selecting a future collection acquisition that will enrich the Garden for years to come.

COLLECTOR'S CIRCLE

To learn more about the Collector's Circle, please contact Rhea Merrill, Vice President & Chief Strategic and Philanthropic Officer, at rmerrill@naplesgarden.org.

Special thanks to inaugural Collector's Circle Chair, Christine Williamson.

Photo by John Eder

Naples Botanical Garden and
The Sustaining Leadership Council announce

The 23rd Annual

Hats in the Garden

Friday, March 19, 2027

Hats in the Garden Chairs
Shirley Welsh & Jerri Hoffmann

Guests will enjoy a luncheon and afternoon in the Garden featuring a runway presentation

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To support this event, contact hats@naplesgarden.org
Table and ticket sales begin January 2027
For more information, please visit naplesgarden.org/hats



"Naples Botanical Garden is an exquisite opportunity to commune with nature, learn something new on each visit—no matter the season—and perfect for every age from 3 months – 103 years."

—Kathleen, Member since 2021

Photo by John Eder

Your Garden. Your Support.

Naples Botanical Garden thrives because of Members like you.

Your membership powers the Garden's work every day—from caring for thousands of tropical plants and protecting vulnerable native species to inspiring the next generation through educational programs and Nature Play. It also provides our staff with the tools and training needed to care for the Garden and create meaningful experiences for more than 230,000 visitors each year.

Your annual gift helps sustain a beautiful, welcoming place to experience with family and friends. By supporting the Garden through membership, you become a part of our mission to conserve tropical plants and habitats, cultivate beauty, offer knowledge, and inspire the protection of nature.

As a new season unfolds, we hope you'll visit often. While you're here, you'll be sure to discover something new, and take pride in all that your membership makes possible.

See what's in store, just for you!

From morning Members-Only coffee breaks to sun-drenched Saturday evenings, it's all here for you this season, in your Garden.

Season's Eatings

Johnsonville Brats at Fogg Café

Fuel your festive holiday visit with a sizzling Johnsonville brat from our title sponsor

By Jesslyn Ferentz, Content Associate

Bright lights, festive nights, and a juicy Johnsonville Brat hot off the grill! Make your visit to the Garden even more memorable with this seasonal favorite. Gather with family and friends and enjoy a delicious bite while exploring the Garden aglow. Whether you're admiring dazzling displays during Johnsonville Night Lights in the Garden or checking off holiday wish lists in the Berger Shop, a brat is the perfect addition. Visit Fogg Café or any grill station throughout the Garden; check the Johnsonville Night Lights schedule for grill nights.

Johnsonville

Your new breakfast craving: Johnsonville Skillet, featuring andouille sausage, served daily 9 – 11am.

After fueling up at Fogg Café, browse the Jane and Chuck Berger Shop in the Garden for unique stocking stuffers, nature-inspired treasures & thoughtful gifts to make every season bright!

Photo by John Eder

Holiday Gifts, Garden Style

Shop the season at the Berger Shop

By Jesslyn Ferentz, Content Associate



Pink Orchid Ornament • $35



Finchberry Soap • $9.99 – $13



An Anthology of Exquisite Birds • $24.99

Bungalow Birdhouse • $35



Hand-Painted Wine Glasses • $30 each

Members save 10% on regularly priced items in Fogg Café and the Berger Shop in the Garden!



Naples Botanical Garden™

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