



Smithsonian Gardens

EXHIBITION SERIES

2019–2020

Interpretive Master Plan





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SMITHSONIAN GARDENS

“Look deep into nature, and
then you will understand everything better.”

– Albert Einstein

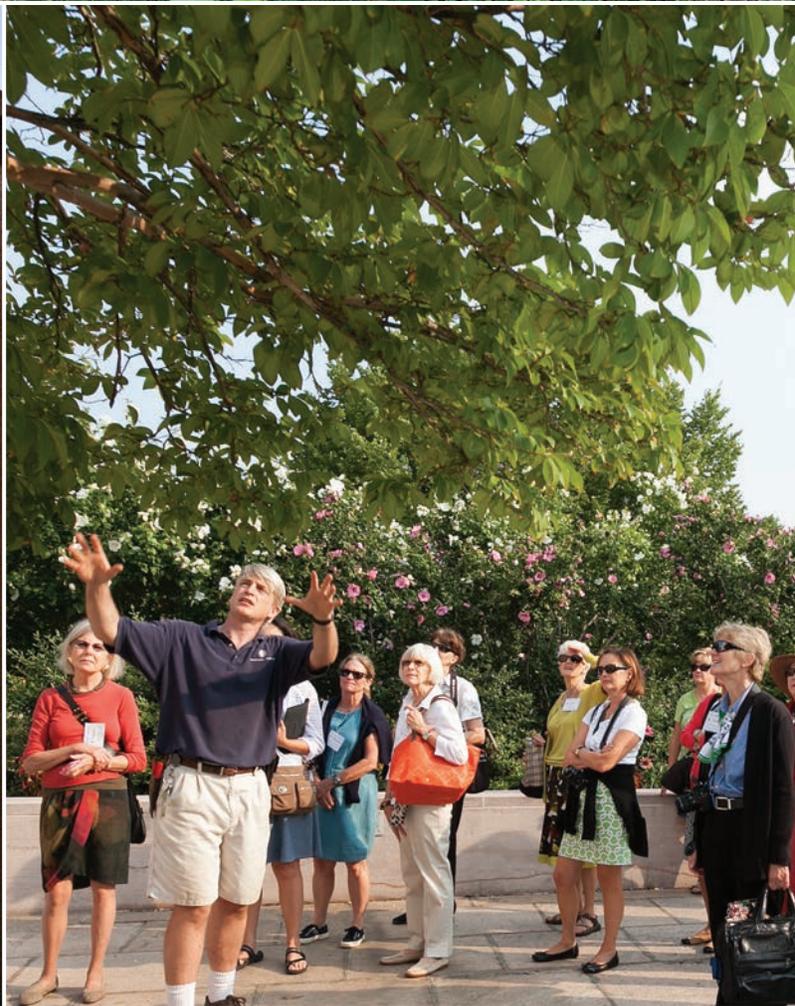
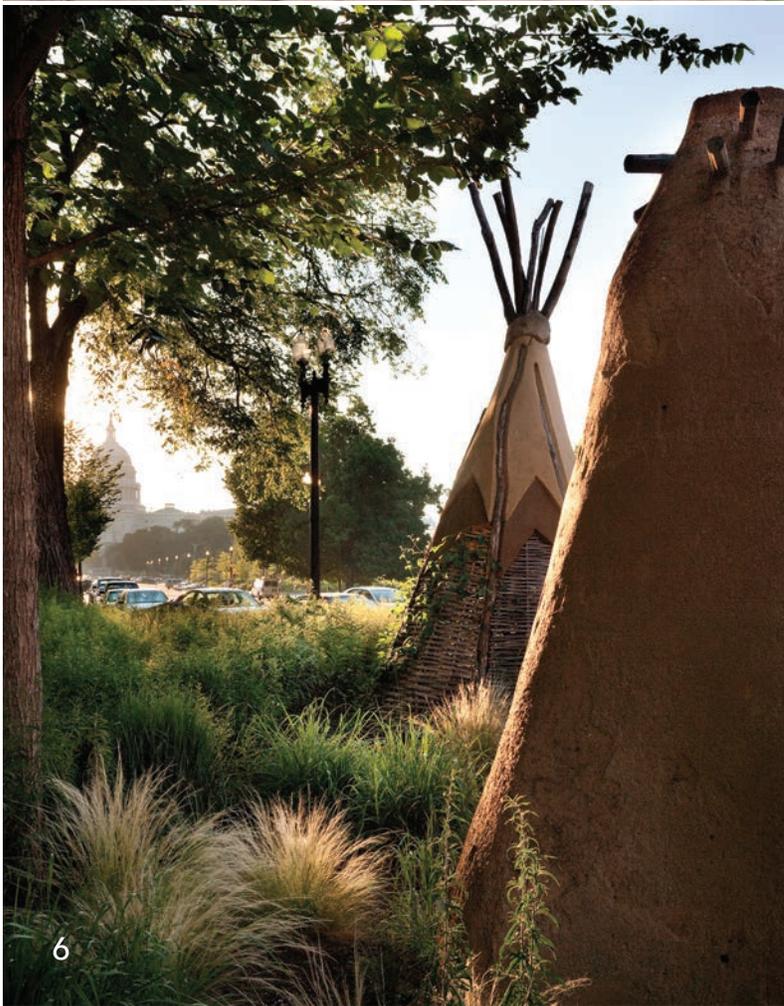
WELCOME STATEMENT

Smithsonian Gardens is delighted to announce the launch of our interpretive master plan, recurring exhibition series and, in particular, our inaugural exhibition, *Habitat* (2019–2020). These initiatives are collaborative efforts involving the entire Smithsonian Gardens staff. By focusing the efforts of our diverse and talented staff, including specialists such as educators, curators, interior and exterior horticulturists, entomologists, and landscape architects, we have developed a rich vision for *Habitat* and for our ongoing exhibition series in general through the development of this, our first interpretive master plan.

The development of a recurring exhibition series is the latest step in Smithsonian Gardens' forty-five-year journey. Over the last decade, we have changed our name, refined our mission, achieved accreditation from the American Alliance of Museums, and developed our second five-year strategic plan. Through a keen focus on the symbiosis of interpretation, exhibits, and education, we continue to grow more fully into our role as an accredited museum. This exhibition series is the embodiment of Smithsonian Gardens' mission to **"Engage, Inform, and Inspire"** as well as of our transformative goals to become **"a museum with a broadly recognized mission"** and **"a public garden with global impact."**

With this exhibition series, we encourage you to take a fresh look at Smithsonian Gardens through the unique lens of each exhibition and to consider Smithsonian Gardens as a singular museum. With the launch of *Habitat* in 2019, our journey will have just begun. We invite you to join us on it.

Barbara W. Faust
Director





INTERPRETIVE MASTER PLAN DEFINITION

An interpretive master plan is a preliminary study of how an organization's current strategic plan and programs align with its vision for a new initiative. It reconfirms the organization's mission as well as:

- Establishes the goals and objectives
- Identifies stakeholders and audiences
- Develops key messages and critical questions
- Identifies programming opportunities

This interpretive master plan provides a road map for launching the multi-year Smithsonian Gardens Exhibition Series and establishes interpretive strategies for the inaugural exhibition, ***Habitat***.





MISSION

As a vital and vibrant part of the Smithsonian experience, we **engage** people with plants and gardens, **inform** on the roles both play in our cultural and natural worlds, and **inspire** appreciation and stewardship.

TRANSFORMATIVE GOALS

- Goal I:** To be a public garden with global impact
- Goal II:** To be a museum with a broadly recognized mission
- Goal III:** To be an institution with the resources to meet its vision and strategic objectives



“To plant a garden is
to believe in tomorrow.”

– Audrey Hepburn

VISION

Smithsonian Gardens extends the Smithsonian’s museum experience in a public garden setting, inspiring visitors with exceptional displays and educating them about horticulture, plants, the natural and built environments, and artistic design.

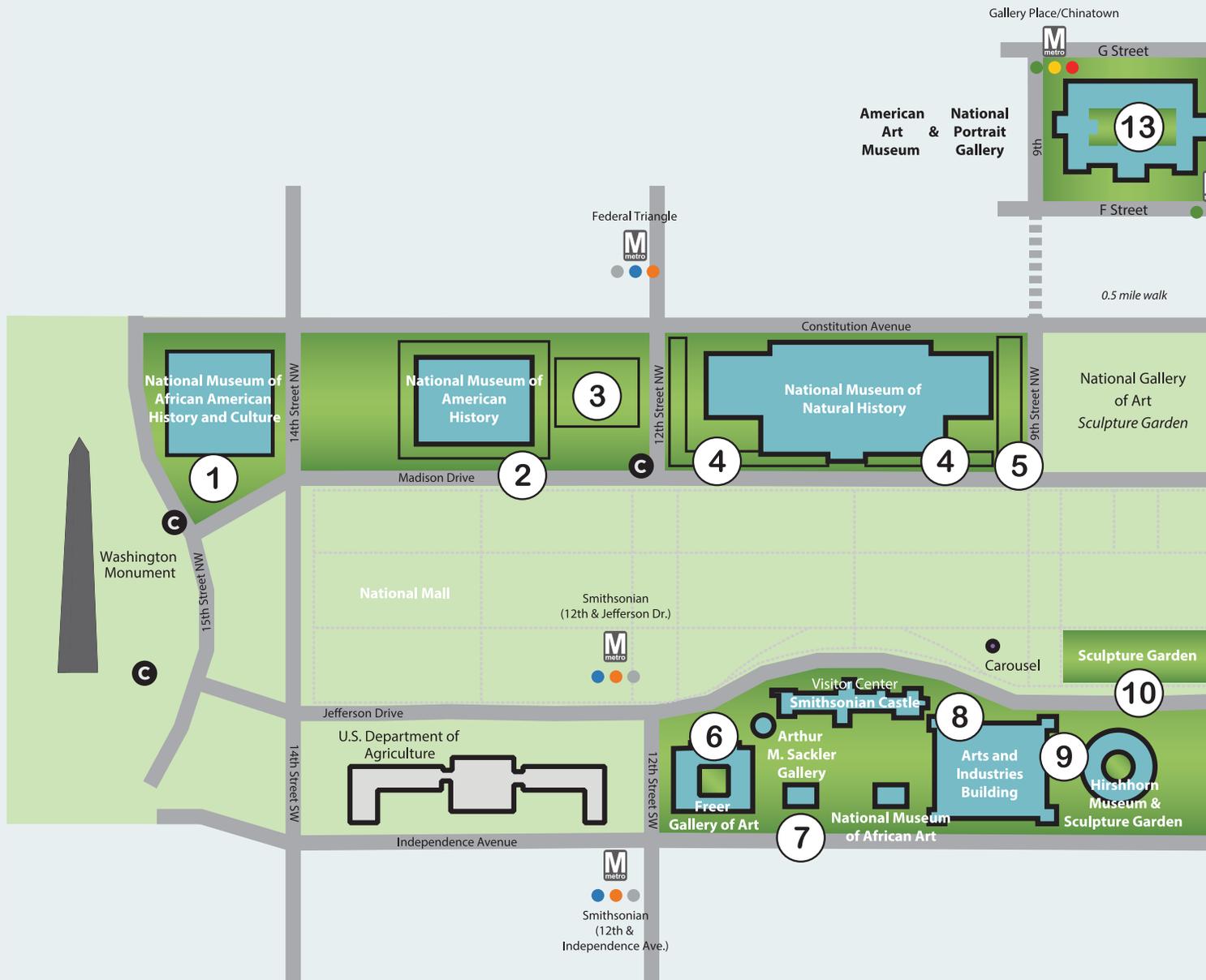
Smithsonian Gardens supports the Smithsonian in meeting its critical challenges of understanding and sustaining a biodiverse planet, interpreting the many roles that plants and gardens play in world culture, understanding and preserving American history, and magnifying the transformative power of arts and design.

A living classroom and urban sanctuary, **Smithsonian Gardens provides** a memorable, relaxing, and restorative destination for visitors to the Smithsonian Institution and National Mall.

We seek to be globally recognized for significant collections, outstanding horticultural displays, and engaging educational programs. **Smithsonian Gardens demonstrates and contributes** innovative professional expertise, best practices, and state-of-the-art operations to the field of horticulture.



SMITHSONIAN GARDENS



1
National Museum of African American History and Culture



2
Common Ground: Our American Garden



3
Victory Garden



4
Urban Bird Habitat



5
Pollinator Garden

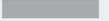
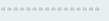


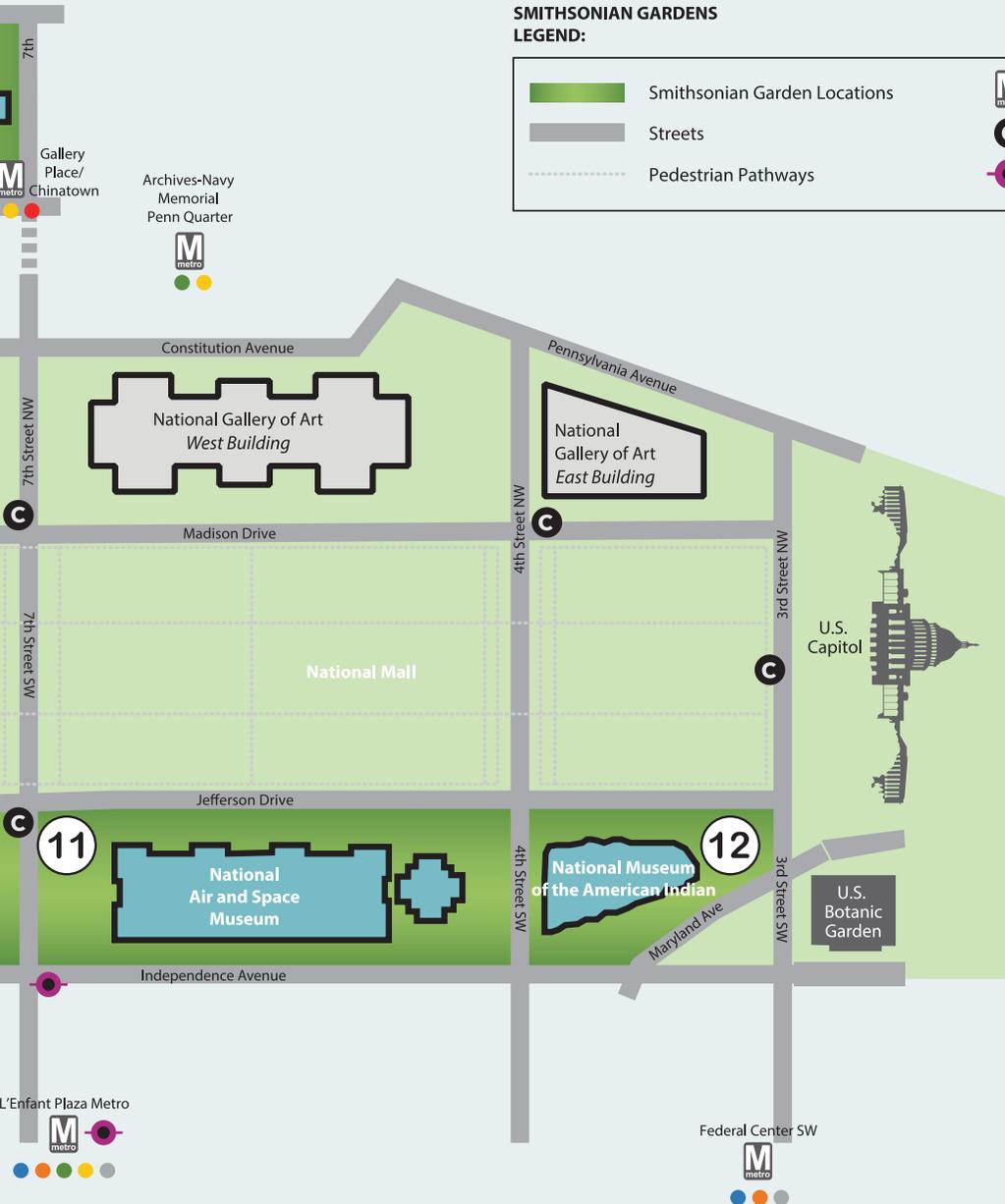
6
Freer Gallery Courtyard



7
Enid A. ...

**SMITHSONIAN GARDENS
LEGEND:**

-  Smithsonian Garden Locations
-  Streets
-  Pedestrian Pathways
-  Metro
-  DC Circulator National Mall Bus Route Stops
-  District Wharf Shuttle Stops





SMITHSONIAN GARDENS EXHIBITION SERIES

OVERVIEW

The **Smithsonian Gardens Exhibition Series** is a new holistic approach to garden education, exhibits, and displays, in which the full Smithsonian Gardens team works together to develop programming that interrelates and supports a single unifying theme. This initiative will incorporate:

- Seasonal horticulture displays
 - Interior
 - Exterior
- Exhibits
- Interpretation
- Educational programs
- Communications
- Events



SMITHSONIAN GARDENS EXHIBITION SERIES

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The goals of the Smithsonian Gardens Exhibition Series are to:

- Promote Smithsonian Gardens as one singular museum
- Provide a cohesive link to all of our separate garden spaces, interiors, and educational programs while still maintaining the unique identity of each
- Instill innovation and freshness to the gardens each year
- Encourage visitors to view the gardens and our mission from a different perspective each time they visit
- Encourage new and repeat visitors
- Provide a greater depth of experience within a given topic
- Create marketing and sponsorship opportunities







SMITHSONIAN GARDENS EXHIBITION SERIES



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Themes will support the Smithsonian Gardens Mission and Vision
- Themes will be broad and flexible enough to incorporate as many gardens as possible
- Themes will be selected two to three years prior to installation
- Staff from all four Smithsonian Gardens divisions will be involved in planning every aspect of the exhibitions
- The gardens will retain their own unique identities throughout the exhibition series
- The number and placement of the displays will vary from theme to theme
- Not all exhibits will be on display for the duration of the theme
- The level of design will reflect the temporary nature of the exhibitions
- Content will be layered to engage multiple visitor types

SMITHSONIAN GARDENS EXHIBITION SERIES

STAKEHOLDERS

Key stakeholders for the Smithsonian Gardens Exhibition Series include:

- Smithsonian Gardens staff, volunteers, and interns, including all four divisions:
 - Grounds Management Operations
 - Greenhouse Nursery Operations
 - Horticulture Collections, Management, and Education
 - Headquarters
- Leadership and staff of other Smithsonian museums and units
- Outside partners, including:
 - Government agencies
 - Educational institutions
 - Non-profit organizations
 - Community groups
- Supporters and potential supporters, including:
 - Individual donors
 - Corporate sponsors
 - Foundations
- The local, national, and international gardening community
- Researchers, fellows, and visiting academics
- Smithsonian Board of Regents
- Members of Congress





SMITHSONIAN GARDENS EXHIBITION SERIES

AUDIENCES

Target audiences for the Smithsonian Gardens Exhibition Series include:

- Visitors interested in horticulture, for whom Smithsonian Gardens is a destination
- Visitors interested in the selected theme subject matter, who make Smithsonian Gardens a destination
- National and international visitors to the Smithsonian Institution and the National Mall
- Groups seeking educational programs, for whom Smithsonian Gardens is a living classroom
- Local visitors, who may return for repeat visits and programs
- Virtual visitors
- Our neighbors on the National Mall, for whom Smithsonian Gardens is an urban oasis
- Smithsonian Institution staff, volunteers, and interns
- Professional partners and peers





SMITHSONIAN GARDENS EXHIBITION SERIES

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING

Smithsonian Gardens offers a wide range of educational programs, which will be adapted to incorporate the themes and messages of the Smithsonian Gardens Exhibition Series.

Educational programs include:

- Seasonal garden tours and activities
- *Let's Talk!* series
- Family days
- Festivals
- Adult programs
- Youth programs
- Online educational resources
- Professional development programs
- Teacher workshops
- Collaborative events and programs with internal/external partners

DIGITAL OUTREACH

In addition to on-site programs and exhibits, Smithsonian Gardens offers a wide variety of online resources, accessible via the **gardens.si.edu** website. These digital platforms will be updated to reflect the themes and messages of the Smithsonian Gardens Exhibition Series.

- Virtual exhibitions
- Videos and podcasts
- Community of Gardens mobile website
- Blogs
- Digital newsletter
- Social media presence

SMITHSONIAN GARDENS EXHIBITION SERIES

UNIFYING ELEMENTS

The Smithsonian Gardens Exhibition Series will provide a cohesive link to all of the gardens. Strategies for achieving this goal include:

- An overarching logo and look and feel for all Smithsonian Gardens Exhibition Series elements (this would be updated for each theme)
- Consistent positioning of interpretive signage
- Wayfinding showing the extent and location of the exhibition's different elements
- Concise intro text introducing the Smithsonian Gardens Exhibition Series and exhibition theme in each garden
- A consistent voice throughout the interpretive panels
- Repetition of key questions and/or titles throughout the exhibition
- A virtual exhibition including an interactive map and photos and descriptions of each garden/exhibit
- Rack cards/brochures for each exhibition with an updatable list of upcoming events and programs







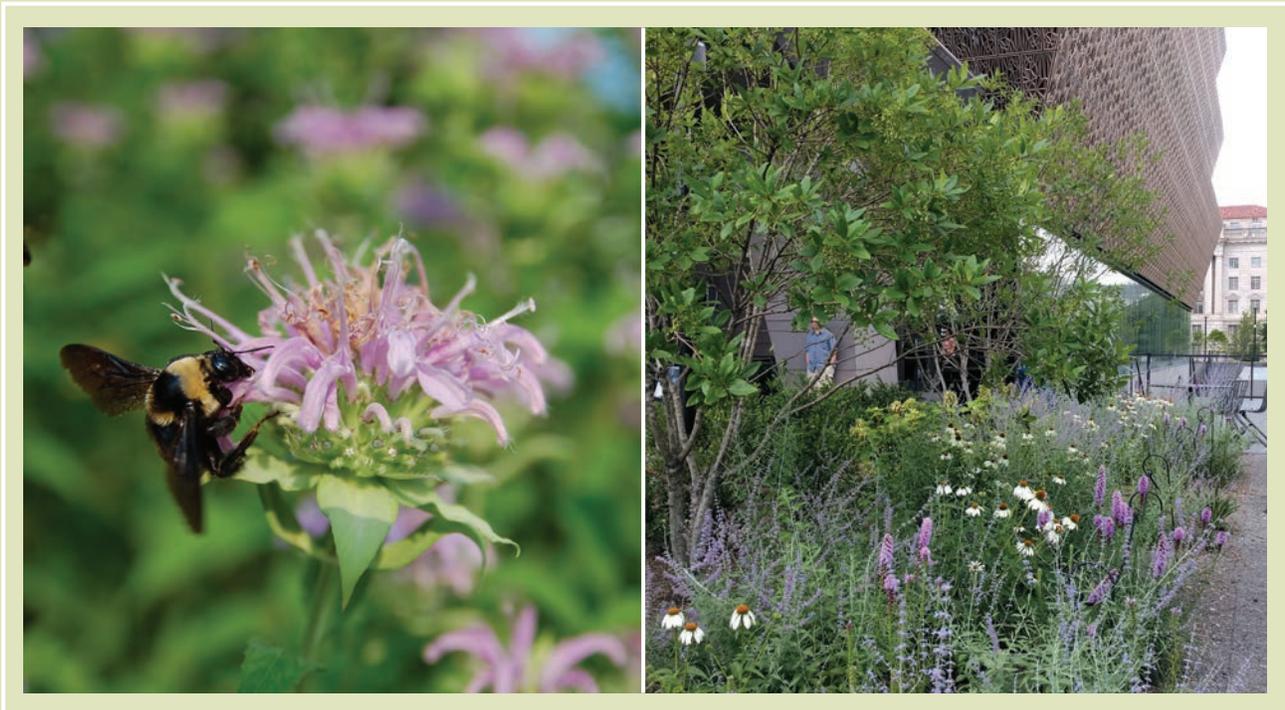
SMITHSONIAN GARDENS EXHIBITION SERIES

THEMES

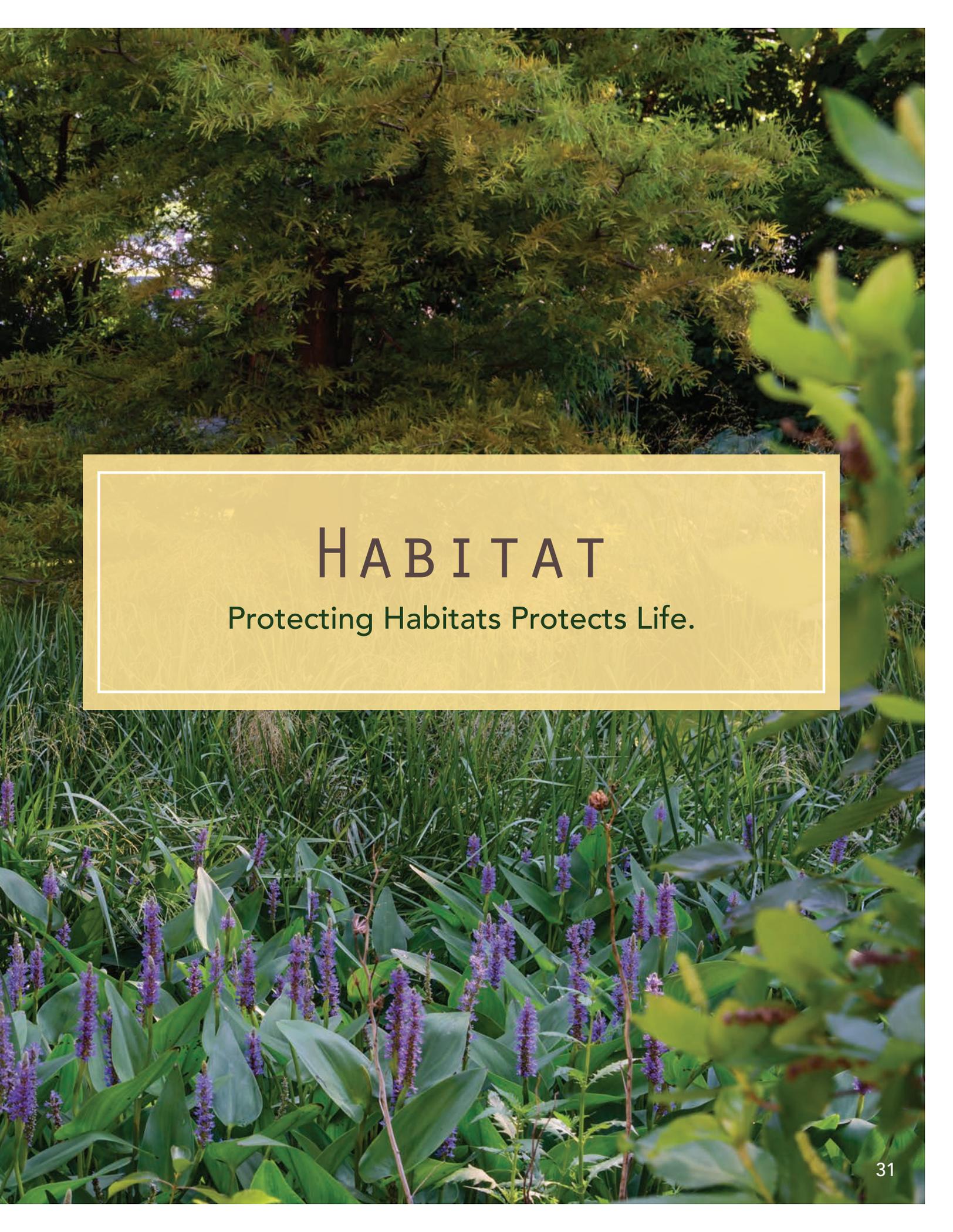
The themes for the Smithsonian Gardens Exhibition Series will be selected based on the following criteria:

- Mission relevance
- Audience appeal
- Visitor experience
- Programming opportunities
- Partnership and funding potential

Future exhibitions will address broad themes such as art, entertainment, history, and the senses.







HABITAT

Protecting Habitats Protects Life.



SMITHSONIAN GARDENS HABITAT

OVERVIEW

The 2019-2020 Smithsonian Gardens Exhibition Series theme will be Habitat. Habitat was selected for its mission relevance, particularly as it relates to the Smithsonian Institution's Grand Challenge of **"understanding and sustaining a biodiverse planet"** and Smithsonian Gardens' Mission to **"inform on the roles people and plants play in our cultural and natural worlds."**

CONTENT HIERARCHY

BIG IDEA

The "big idea" is the overarching message that visitors will understand upon leaving the exhibition. It is the basis for all the content that is presented and unifies each section of the exhibition. For *Habitat*, the big idea is:

PROTECTING HABITATS PROTECTS LIFE.



SMITHSONIAN GARDENS HABITAT

KEY MESSAGES

The key messages in an exhibition are a small number of take-away statements that directly support the big idea. They provide a conceptual framework that drives content development to reinforce the big idea and will resonate with visitors. **The key messages for *Habitat* are:**

- **Habitats are homes.**
- **Habitats are interconnected and fragile.**
- **Habitats need to be protected.**

CRITICAL QUESTIONS

The critical questions support the key messages and shape the exhibition's educational goals. These are the questions that the exhibition should answer for visitors. **The critical questions for *Habitat* are:**

HABITATS ARE HOMES.

- What is in a habitat?
- What roles do habitats play?
- What makes a successful habitat?

HABITATS ARE INTERCONNECTED AND FRAGILE.

- What are the biggest threats facing habitats?
- How do humans impact habitats?
- How do habitats adapt?
- How are habitats interconnected?

HABITATS NEED TO BE PROTECTED.

- Why should we protect habitats?
- How do we create habitats?
- How do we conserve habitats?
- How do we restore habitats?

INTERPRETIVE STRATEGIES

Smithsonian Gardens will use a variety of interpretive strategies to communicate *Habitat's* big idea, key messages, and critical questions, including:

- Existing habitat-related exhibits, including the Pollinator Garden and the Urban Bird Habitat Garden
- Existing exhibits supplemented with an additional layer of habitat-related interpretation, including the Victory Garden, the Kathrine Dulin Folger Rose Garden, and NMAI Native Landscape
- New habitat-related exhibits
- Learning pods (outdoor classrooms)
- A virtual exhibition
- Educational programs





SMITHSONIAN GARDENS HABITAT

ANTICIPATED VISITOR BEHAVIORS

VISITOR TYPES

Habitat will target a wide range of visitors with varying levels of knowledge of and interest in the exhibition's themes. The exhibition will use a hierarchy of information and multiple experience types to engage visitors.

Skimmers

What will they do?

Skimmers include visitors who walk through the gardens on their way to another destination. The exhibition will draw them in with eye-catching displays, large-scale sculptures, and large headlines.

Strollers

What will they do?

Strollers include visitors to the Smithsonian and tourists exploring the National Mall, who are receptive to learning more. The exhibition will draw them in with thought-provoking questions, interesting facts, and programs in the gardens.

Scholars

What will they do?

Scholars include visitors interested in horticulture, for whom Smithsonian Gardens is a destination. The exhibition will draw them in with interpretive signage, maps of the exhibits, and digital resources, including information on upcoming events and programs.



SMITHSONIAN GARDENS HABITAT

ANTICIPATED VISITOR BEHAVIORS

VISITOR PREFERENCES

The Smithsonian's IPOP model categorizes visitors according to their preferences for experiences based on ideas, people, objects, and physical. Ideally, exhibitions should address all four categories. Many experiences address more than one preference type.

IDEAS

Visitors drawn to: Conceptual and abstract thinking, facts, topics, and themes

Engagement tools: Interpretive panels featuring information about habitats, plants, and animals

PEOPLE

Visitors drawn to: Emotional connections, stories, and lives

Engagement tools: Public programs in which visitors interact with gardeners, personal stories and profiles, and information on how visitors can make a difference

OBJECTS

Visitors drawn to: Aesthetics, visual language, craft, materials, and style

Engagement tools: Eye-catching horticultural displays and works of art

PHYSICAL

Visitors drawn to: Somatic experiences, atmosphere, activity, hands-on, and immersion

Engagement tools: Walking tours through the gardens, hands-on activities, and horticultural displays that engage multiple senses



Live Oak Habitat



Life Underground

SMITHSONIAN GARDENS HABITAT

EXHIBIT CONCEPTS

The following exhibits are proposed as part of *Habitat*:

LIVE OAK HABITAT

West side of the National Museum of African American History and Culture

The *Live Oak Habitat* exhibit emphasizes the relationship between the natural environment and American history seen through the African American lens. Five existing live oak trees are complemented by interpretive signage and sculptural elements. The live oak trees provide protection to a diversity of plants while offering a comfortable and safe space for gathering, reflection, and education. A temporary shade sculpture is also proposed to embrace the reading grove and provide supplemental shade. The shade sculpture will reference “hush harbors,” secret spaces used by enslaved people for gathering, worship, and culture sharing.

DEAD WOOD IS LIFE

East side of the National Museum of American History

The exhibit *Dead Wood is Life* will address the critical role dead wood plays in habitats. Standing dead trees (snags) and fallen debris provide microhabitats for a multitude of living organisms, from the smallest insect to the largest of mammals. The sculpture *Dead Wood is Life*, created by local artist Foon Sham, will direct attention to the crucial practice of letting logs lie where they fall.

LIFE UNDERGROUND

West side of the National Museum of American History

The exhibit *Life Underground* will address the invisible interspecies relationships that help support healthy habitats. A large mushroom form, created from linked wooden blocks, sculpted by local artist Foon Sham, will symbolize the complex symbiotic relationships between seemingly unrelated organisms in a habitat.

VICTORY GARDEN

East side of the National Museum of American History

During WWI and WWII, American citizens altered their habitats to support the war effort. From California to Florida, Americans plowed backyards, vacant lots, parks, baseball fields, and schoolyards to create gardens. The Victory Garden *Habitat* exhibit will act as a living example of how community plots produced abundant food for the folks at home, highlighting heirloom crops available during the wars.

SMITHSONIAN GARDENS HABITAT

EXHIBIT CONCEPTS

The following exhibits are proposed as part of *Habitat*:

NESTS

Northwest side of the National Museum of Natural History

The exhibit *Nests* thematically fits into the Urban Bird Habitat. Avian nests provide physical protection, camouflage from predators, and a method for regulating temperature for the eggs inside. The exhibit will highlight various nest forms that are as diverse as the birds that build them.

POLLINATOR PALACES

East side of the National Museum of Natural History

The Pollinator Garden will be enhanced with sculptural insect homes: "Pollinator Palaces." These larger-than-life whimsical figures will illustrate the importance of providing pollinators with diverse natural materials to use to build their own "palaces."

2019 ORCHID EXHIBIT

Robert and Arlene Kogod Courtyard, Donald W. Reynolds Center for American Art and Portraiture

The 2019 Orchid Exhibit, held in the Kogod Courtyard of the Donald W. Reynolds Center, will highlight the orchid collections of Smithsonian Gardens and the United States Botanic Garden. Eight raised planter beds transformed into lush tropical environments will highlight orchids' roles in their habitats as hosts and contributors.

BIOMES

S. Dillon Ripley Center Concourse

The exhibit *Biomes* will explore the characteristics and features of biomes found in North America and the importance of conserving these diverse ecosystems. Miniature landscapes located in the S. Dillon Ripley Center Concourse will illustrate differences between ecosystems, including plant and animal adaptations to the environment and human activities.

HIVE

West side of the Arts and Industries Building, Enid A. Haupt Garden

A beehive is an enclosed structure in which species of the subgenus *Apis* live and raise their young. The *Hive* exhibit, to be constructed in the Enid A. Haupt Garden, will provide a fun, festive structure to interact with visitors, host educational programs, and provide information on the role of bees, native and introduced, in habitats.

CONCEPTS IN CONSERVATION

Enid A. Haupt Garden

This series of four exhibits will illustrate the interconnectivity of species within their habitats and the value of their protection.

LIFE UNDER THE UMBRELLA

East and west terraces, Enid A. Haupt Garden

This exhibit will use “umbrella species” to illustrate how species are interconnected within their habitats and the importance of protecting them. As the term implies, an umbrella species casts an “umbrella” over other species by being more or equally sensitive to changes in the habitat. The existing umbrellas in the garden will provide physical structures for interpretive signage profiling up to 14 species.

UNDERWATER FOUNDATION FOR LIFE

Waterfall, Enid A. Haupt Garden

This exhibit will take the form of a “coral reef” composed of succulent plants and sculptural fish displayed on a platform within the waterfall feature of the Fountain Garden. Coral reefs are an example of a “foundation species” as they provide habitat for one in four marine species. Interpretation will address how “foundation species” create habitats and issues affecting the health of coral reefs.

LIVING ON FIGS

East or west terrace, Enid A. Haupt Garden

This exhibit will illustrate how a single “keystone species” can play a critical role in the health and functioning of an ecosystem. The exhibit will use a large archway with an obvious keystone and interpretive messaging to highlight the importance of the fig as a keystone species.

SIGN OF THE DRAGONFLY

Moongate Garden, Enid A. Haupt Garden

This exhibit will feature up to 20 large-scale models of dragonflies mounted on rods of various heights in and around the Moongate Garden pond. Dragonflies are “indicator species,” organisms whose presence, absence, or abundance reflects a specific environmental condition. Interpretation will include information on how conservationists use indicator species, facts about dragonflies and their habitats, and examples of other indicator species.

SMITHSONIAN GARDENS HABITAT

EXHIBIT CONCEPTS

The following exhibits are proposed as part of *Habitat*:

HOMES

Mary Livingston Ripley Garden

The exhibit *Homes* will feature different types of structures that animals call home, from birdhouses to beehives and insect habitats. Whimsical sculptures of human homes will draw visitors into the garden. Once in, they will discover fun forms to create for their own gardens.

HABITAT OF FLIGHT

Northeast side of the National Air and Space Museum

The *Habitat of Flight* exhibit will explore the importance of wildlife in the science of flight. Signage and plantings around the National Air and Space Museum north terrace will highlight habitat features that ensure the survival of birds, insects, and other wild creatures and how critters influenced inventions of flight.

NATIVE AMERICAN LANDSCAPE

National Museum of the American Indian

The *Habitat* exhibit at the National Museum of the American Indian is a collection of indigenous trees, shrubs, and perennials grown in a piedmont landscape. The plants support wildlife found in the community and have ethnobotanical use for Native American peoples. The pond is lush with aquatic plants and provides a habitat for amphibians, birds, small mammals, and insects. This exhibit replicates habitat pockets still found in the mid-Atlantic area and is an example of how modern landscapes can provide habitats.

“One touch of nature makes the whole world kin.”

– William Shakespeare

SMITHSONIAN GARDENS HABITAT MARK

This mark will appear on all *Habitat*-related materials to identify the exhibition.



Two colors,
PMS 583 and PMS 384



One color, black and white



SMITHSONIAN GARDENS HABITAT

LEARNING PODS

Learning pods, or outdoor classrooms, will be located in the following areas:

- Enid A. Haupt Garden
- Mary Livingston Ripley Garden
- Pollinator Garden

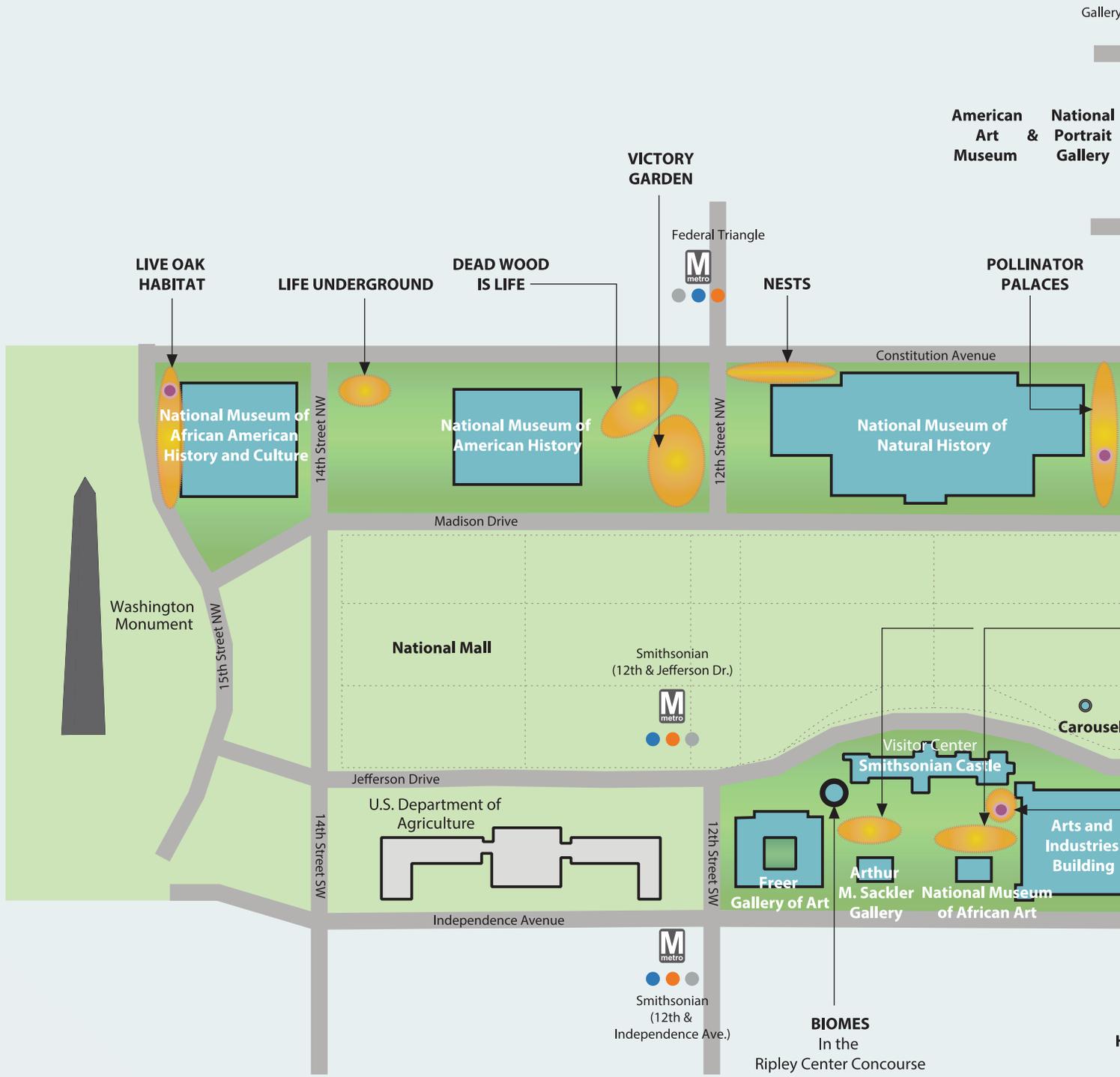


VIRTUAL EXHIBITION

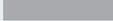
Habitat will include a virtual exhibition on the Smithsonian Gardens website, mimicking the look and feel of the physical exhibition. It will feature an interactive map of the exhibits, educational resources, video interviews with gardeners, and information on upcoming events and programs.

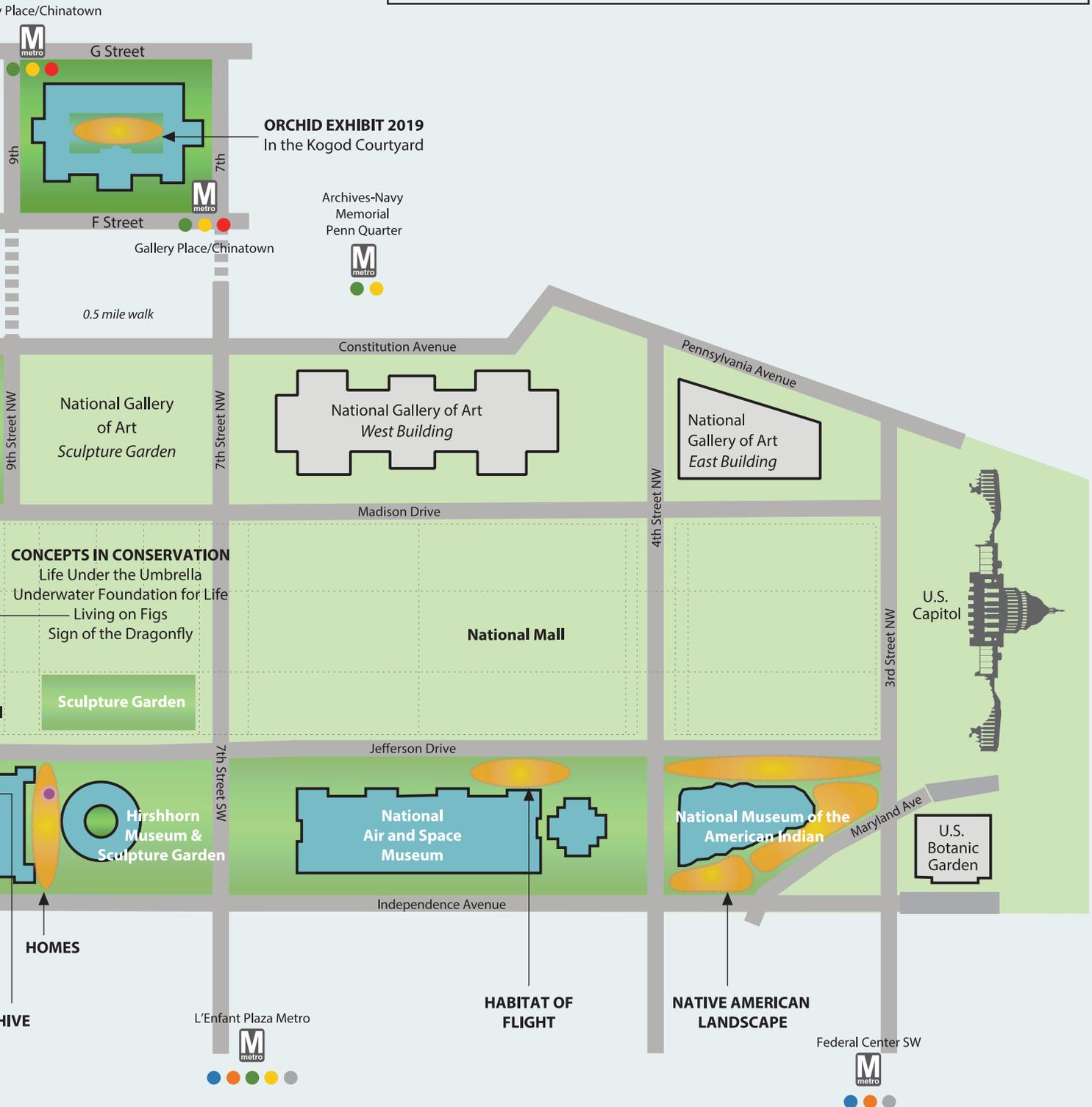
HABITAT

PROPOSED EXHIBITS MAP AND SPACE USAGE ANALYSIS



LEGEND:

	Smithsonian Garden Locations		Proposed Habitat Exhibits
	Streets		Proposed Learning Pods/ Outdoor Classrooms
	Pedestrian Pathways		
Not to Scale			





SMITHSONIAN GARDENS HABITAT

OPTIMUM VISITOR FLOW

Habitat will be spread throughout Smithsonian Gardens, providing multiple entry points to the exhibition. This will maximize its visibility and target visitors to other Smithsonian museums and the National Mall. The exhibition will seek to entice visitors to move between the gardens and make navigation as easy as possible.

Potential strategies for achieving this include:

- “You Are Here” wayfinding signage to help visitors navigate the gardens.
- An urban walking trail to promote wellness while guiding visitors through the gardens. This could be offered as a downloadable guide on the website and/or as a printed handout.
- Some form of interactive experience, such as 3D plaques located in each garden depicting flora and fauna, which visitors could use to create rubbings and collect them all.



SMITHSONIAN GARDENS HABITAT

BENCHMARKS FOR SUCCESS

Once the *Habitat* exhibition is open, Smithsonian Gardens will measure its success based on the qualitative and quantitative outcomes listed below. These will be assessed through visitor surveys, staff observations and feedback, metrics, and other forms of evaluation. The information gathered will be used to improve future exhibitions moving forward.

Visitors to the *Habitat* exhibition will:

- Have an increased awareness of Smithsonian Gardens, its mission, and its role as an accredited museum
- Be aware of the many garden spaces that incorporate Smithsonian Gardens
- Find the content interesting and relevant
- Understand *Habitat's* Big Idea, Key Messages, and Critical Questions
- Visit the website to learn more
- Share and comment on their experience on social media
- Return for repeat visits and programs
- Recommend the exhibition to others
- Understand their role in protecting habitats
- Be inspired to protect habitats and make responsible decisions
- Develop the skills to conserve and restore habitats

The *Habitat* exhibition will increase:

- Smithsonian Gardens' visibility on the National Mall and within the Smithsonian Institution
- Visitation to and engagement with the gardens
- Program attendance
- Sponsorship and partnership opportunities
- Traffic to the Smithsonian Gardens website
- Social media engagement
- Media coverage

SMITHSONIAN GARDENS HABITAT

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

BIOME

A community of plants and animals that occupies a distinct region, such as a tropical rain forest, a grassland, or a desert

CONSERVATION

Protecting natural resources by regulating human use of the natural environment

ECOSYSTEM

A community of living organisms and their physical environment

EPIPHYTE

A plant that grows on another plant but is not a parasite, including many species of orchids, mosses, lichens, and ferns

FOUNDATION SPECIES

Species that create and maintain habitats that benefit other organisms

HABITAT

The place where a plant or animal species naturally lives and grows

INDICATOR SPECIES

Species whose presence, absence, or abundance reflects a specific environmental condition

KEYSTONE SPECIES

Species that are critical to the health and functioning of an ecosystem

PRESERVATION

Protecting natural resources by eliminating human impact on the natural environment

RESTORATION

Returning an environment to its natural state

UMBRELLA SPECIES

Species whose conservation indirectly protects many other species

“When we try to pick out anything by itself,
we find it hitched to everything else in the Universe.”

– John Muir





Smithsonian Gardens
gardens.si.edu