

# Smithsonian Gardens

Annual Report  
2020–2021



Smithsonian Gardens





**Cover:** Mary Livingston Ripley Garden Tulipa 'Juan' and Erysimum 'Sugar Rush Yellow'. | **Left:** Live oak trees (*Quercus virginiana*) in the landscape at the National Museum of African American History and Culture.

# Welcome from the Director

When I think about the challenges 2020 and 2021 threw us, I am reminded of the live oaks on the grounds of the National Museum of African American History and Culture. For centuries, the live oak has been a symbol of safety, strength, and resilience.

Thanks to the strength and resilience of Smithsonian Gardens' staff, volunteers, and supporters, we have weathered a challenging two years and have emerged stronger than ever.

Our horticulturists and gardeners enabled our gardens to remain open when many museums were closed at a time when people needed safe spaces for peace and reflection.

Our education and programming staff quickly pivoted to online programs that engaged more people than ever before.

And our collections and greenhouse staff worked tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure that our collections received the care they need.

We could not have done it all without the help and support of our volunteers, donors, and community partners.

I am proud of what we have accomplished during this difficult period and I am excited about what is to come next.

**Joy Columbus**

Director, Smithsonian Gardens





Virginia bluebells (*Mertensia virginica*).

Table of Contents

Our Mission .....4

2020 & 2021 by the  
Numbers .....8

Smithsonian Gardens &  
the Pandemic ..... 10

Collections..... 14

Exhibitions ..... 30

Education & Outreach ..... 42

Collaborations.....64

Sustainability &  
Resilience ..... 78

Recognition .....86

Our Team ..... 92

Funding ..... 108

Support Smithsonian  
Gardens .....116



# Our Mission: Engage. Inform. Inspire.

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.

*Ginkgo biloba Tulipa 'Yellow Present' and MATRIX True Blue Pansy at the Enid A. Haupt Garden.*





*Fall foliage at the National Native American Veterans Memorial at the National Museum of the American Indian.*

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.

A living classroom and urban sanctuary, Smithsonian Gardens provides a memorable and engaging 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.







# 2020 & 2021 by the Numbers



**\$1.3M** RAISED  
to supplement Smithsonian  
Gardens' federal budget in  
FY 2020 and FY 2021



**40,000**  
**IMAGES**  
digitized in the Archives of  
American Gardens



**175** YEARS  
The Smithsonian anniversary  
celebrated by Smithsonian  
Gardens' new Sunburst  
175th orchid



**10,000**  
**VIEWS**  
of the *Let's Talk Gardens*  
webinar series



**1,800** TREES  
in the Smithsonian Gardens Tree  
Collection supported by the Soils  
Management Plan



**6 million** HITS  
of Smithsonian Gardens'  
Magnolia Madness social media  
posts in March 2021



**3rd**  
Smithsonian Gardens'  
Instagram account recognized  
as the third most popular public  
gardens account





# Smithsonian Gardens & the Pandemic

“During the scary days of COVID, our gardens were not just pretty places; they became sanctuaries. With much of the city shuttered, our gardens offered a safe place for locals to escape their apartments, relax, and be surrounded by beauty and positive life.

Many of the people I spoke to had never found our gardens before COVID, but since they were unable to travel, they were exploring their ‘backyards’ and were delighted to find our gardens. I have been told MANY times that the gardens were a ‘lifeline’ during the pandemic.

The Smithsonian might be an educational complex, but through the gardens, we also provide peace and tranquility to all who seek it, even when the museums are closed.

Never have I been more proud to work for the Smithsonian than I have during these troubling times.”



**JANET DRAPER**  
Lead Horticulturist,  
Mary Livingston Ripley Garden



“  
**Previous page:** Visitors relax in the Enid A. Haupt Garden’s Moongate Garden beneath a blooming saucer magnolia (*Magnolia x soulangeana*). | **Right:** COVID-19 safety signage in the Enid A. Haupt Garden

## ADAPTING TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted our lives in many ways. Like many organizations, Smithsonian Gardens had to adapt to the changes the pandemic brought.

Throughout it all, Smithsonian Gardens’ essential workers continued to care for our gardens and collections.

While many other museums were closed, Smithsonian Gardens remained open which provided visitors with vibrant, inspirational spaces to relax and reflect during challenging times.

In a way, having less people around made my job much easier because I wasn’t continually responding to service requests, I had full access to the museums for an entire work day, and staff and visitors weren’t generating as much trash to attract pests, so I saw a significant decrease in overall pest activity. The downside was that everybody left in a hurry with no idea of when they were going to return, so you can imagine that there were quite a few unpleasant surprises that I routinely discovered.”

ALLISON DINEEN  
Entomologist



With in-person public programs on hold, Smithsonian Gardens staff found new ways to engage visitors online through photos and stories on Instagram, virtual tours, and the *Let’s Talk Gardens* webinar series.

Despite the challenges encountered in 2020 and 2021, Smithsonian Gardens continued to “engage people with plants and gardens, inform on the roles both play in our cultural and natural worlds, and inspire appreciation and stewardship.”





# Collections

**Smithsonian  
Gardens cares for  
diverse collections,  
from living plants  
to archives and  
horticultural artifacts.**

*The grounds surrounding the National Museum of the American Indian recall the natural landscape environment that existed prior to European contact.*





# Living Collections

Smithsonian Gardens Living Plant Collections are grown especially for education, horticultural display, conservation, and research.



## PLANT EXPLORER

Plant Explorer brings Smithsonian Gardens' living collections to the public. This online platform allows users to search the collections, take curated tours, and explore garden maps and images.

## DIGITIZING LIVING COLLECTIONS

Smithsonian Gardens supports the Smithsonian's goal of providing digital access to collections. Thanks to the generous support of Smithsonian funders, Smithsonian Gardens has been digitizing its living collections, including the Orchid Collection and Tree Collection. These digitized collections, available through Plant Explorer, are valuable resources for researchers and educators around the world.

“Debuting in 2019, Plant Explorer gave the public universal access to our living plant collections for the first time. While the gardens have always been publicly accessible to all, Plant Explorer allows people from outside the DC area and around the world to quickly find and learn about the plants we hold.”



**SARAH HEDEAN**  
Living Collections Manager

*Image courtesy of Smithsonian Institution, Eric Long, photographer.*

**Left:** The Smithsonian Gardens Tree Collection includes over 1,800 accessioned specimens, including this Japanese Maple (*Acer palmatum dissectum* 'Viridis'). | **Top:** The Smithsonian Gardens Orchid Collection includes over 4,000 orchid specimens.



Soil samples collected during the development of the Smithsonian Gardens Soils Management Plan.



## SOILS MANAGEMENT PLAN

In 2020 and 2021, Smithsonian Gardens worked with a team of experts to create a comprehensive Soils Management Plan to support the Smithsonian Gardens Tree Collection. The plan will help protect the health of the soils, which are vulnerable to compaction by high levels of visitation and construction projects.



**Did You Know?** A critical concern for collections managers throughout the Smithsonian is the appropriateness of the materials used to house our museum objects and collections. For a living horticultural collection, such as the Smithsonian Gardens Tree Collection, the most basic and critical component of its “housing” is the soil needed to provide a healthy substrate for tree roots, essential macro and micronutrients, and necessary moisture.



The recently completed Smithsonian Gardens Soils Management Plan presents a resilient, campus-wide soils approach for Smithsonian Gardens that will help us achieve consistent, healthy, biologically dynamic soils across our campus. Soils are the literal foundation of our gardens, and it’s exciting to develop best practices to support them, and our gardens, for our next 175 years and beyond.”



**MARISA SCALERA**  
Landscape Architect







“Orchids are for everyone, just like our beloved Smithsonian.”

**JUSTIN KONDRAT**  
Lead Horticulturist, Smithsonian  
Gardens Orchid Collection



### SMITHSONIAN SUNBURST 175TH ORCHID

In 2021, Smithsonian Gardens unveiled a new orchid to celebrate the Smithsonian’s 175th anniversary. Smithsonian Gardens reached out to the wider Smithsonian community to help name it. The name selected was Smithsonian Sunburst 175th. The new orchid joined the more than 4,000 specimens in the Smithsonian Gardens Orchid Collection.

**Did You Know?** The Smithsonian Sunburst 175th orchid’s lineage is composed of nine generations that can be traced back to 1895.

*Smithsonian Secretary Lonnie G. Bunch III holding the Smithsonian Sunburst 175th orchid (x Rhyncattleanthe).*



# Horticultural Artifacts Collection

## SMITHSONIAN OPEN ACCESS

In February 2020, Smithsonian Gardens helped launch the Smithsonian Open Access Initiative, which allows the public to download, share, and reuse copyright-free images. Hundreds of objects from the Smithsonian Gardens Horticultural Artifacts Collection are featured on the Smithsonian Open Access site.

## PRESERVATION

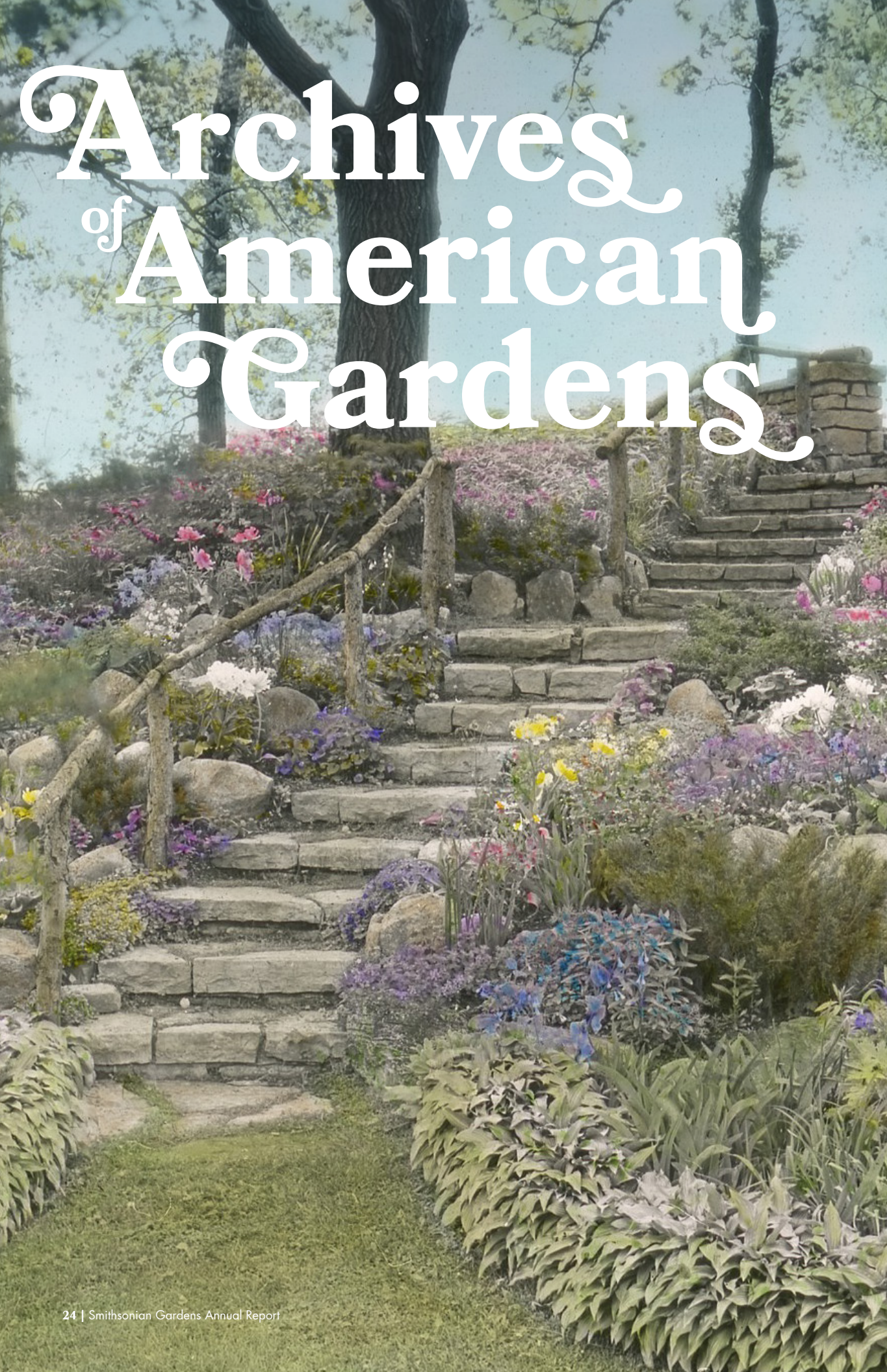
In December 2020, the Smithsonian Museum Conservation Institute completed an examination report for hundreds of bouquet holders in the Horticultural Artifacts Collection. This work will help Smithsonian Gardens preserve the collection for the future.



**Top:** Anna Zastrow, an intern at the Smithsonian's Museum Conservation Institute, assesses Smithsonian Gardens' Frances Jones Poetker Collection of antique bouquet holders. | **Bottom left:** Victorian era cast-iron urn with dragon handles. | **Bottom right:** The Smithsonian Open Access collection includes a digital 3D model of an *Embreea herrenhusana* orchid from the Smithsonian Gardens Orchid Collection.







# Archives of American Gardens



**Far left:** Dalrymple Garden, Hopkins, Minnesota, from *The Garden Club of America Collection*, ca. 1920–1940. **Left:** This formerly unidentified mystery garden in the Archives of American Gardens was identified by a volunteer as part of the grounds of the Governor's Palace in Williamsburg, Virginia, ca. 1920–1935. Image courtesy of Smithsonian Institution, Archives of American Gardens, *The Garden Club of America Collection*.

## SOLVING MYSTERIES

A number of the gardens pictured in the Archives of American Gardens are unidentified. To help solve these mysteries, Smithsonian Gardens reached out to virtual volunteers to do some detective work. They responded with an avalanche of identifications. Volunteers also deciphered and transcribed century-old handwritten letters so that they can now be searched easily online.

“The Archives of American Gardens’ Mystery Gardens project and our projects in the Smithsonian Transcription Center saw huge increases in participation during 2020 and 2021 when so many people were at home. All these efforts by digital volunteers increase our efforts to make our digital assets more easily searchable and discoverable online.”

**KELLY CRAWFORD**  
Museum Specialist





One of Ellen Shipman's garden designs from Bonaire in Orange, New Jersey.

## SHARING COLLECTIONS ONLINE

While the COVID-19 pandemic put large-scale digitization projects on hold, Archives of American Gardens staff found new ways to share collections with the public. They cataloged and described collections, answered hundreds of research queries, and shared collections through the Smithsonian Online Virtual Archives and the Smithsonian Learning Lab.

## ELLEN SHIPMAN GARDEN PHOTOGRAPHY COLLECTION

In August 2021, the Archives of American Gardens acquired the Ellen Shipman Garden Photography Collection. The collection includes 350 glass plate negatives from the 1920s and 1930s that document more than 50 gardens designed by eminent landscape architect Ellen Shipman.

“

I'll always remember the donation of the Shipman Collection as a case of going above and beyond the call of duty! Because of their fragility and the potential of breakage during shipping, the donor very kindly drove up from Florida and delivered the glass plate negatives to the Archives of American Gardens in person. He literally went out of his way to ensure that this collection, which highlights the work of an important and esteemed landscape architect, found a home at AAG.”



**JOYCE CONNOLLY**  
Museum Specialist



# Community of Gardens

Community of Gardens is a digital archive, where gardeners of all backgrounds can share their stories. In 2020 and 2021, collecting focused on stories of habitat and wildlife gardening, stories from women and people of color, and stories related to gardening during the COVID-19 pandemic.

*Jody K. from New Haven, Connecticut, shared the story of how she transformed a once vacant lot into a lush community greenspace with the help of local kids.*



“What I like about the Greenspace is that it’s just a bit of green space, instead of having houses all close to you. Having that piece of green is really nice for me. It’s a long backyard, shady, nice; it looks like a park back there. I like that.”

**JODY K.**  
Community of Gardens Participant

“Community of Gardens helps preserve our diverse garden heritage. This project enables historians, landscape architects, artists, designers, and garden enthusiasts to learn from the ways that gardens and gardeners of all backgrounds have shaped America’s landscape.”

**CINDY BROWN**  
Manager of Collections,  
Education, & Access





# Exhibitions

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Smithsonian Gardens' outdoor exhibitions welcomed visitors when many other museums were closed. Smithsonian Gardens also curated traveling exhibitions, which traveled as far as Tallinn, Estonia.

*Dragonflies on display as part of the HABITAT exhibition in the Moongate Garden within the Enid A. Haupt Garden.*





# Gardening for Victory

## NEW INTERPRETIVE PANELS AT THE VICTORY GARDEN

In fall 2020, Smithsonian Gardens added new interpretative panels to the Victory Garden on the grounds of the National Museum of American History. The panels discuss the Victory Garden program which encouraged Americans to grow their own food during World War II.

The Victory Garden exhibit outside the National Museum of American History.

**Did You Know?** Roughly one half of all American families had a victory garden during World War II. By the end of the war, American families had grown approximately eight million tons of food.



“The Victory Garden enables us to bring history to life. We grow vegetables and display them in a way that allows the visitor to experience history through all of their senses. We bring the items out from behind the museum glass. We grow vegetables with historical significance and although the spirit of the garden is rooted in the 1940s Victory Garden, its plants come to life when we tell the stories about the people who grew them.”

**ERIC CALHOUN**  
Supervisory Horticulturist

### Victory Gardens by the Numbers

- Roughly one half of all American families had a victory garden during World War II.
- There were at least 20 million victory gardens covering more than 20 million acres of American soil by 1943.
- 40% of the nation's produce was supplied by victory gardens by 1944.
- American families had grown approximately 8 million tons of food by the time the war ended in 1945.

## “Garden for Victory!”

*This garden is inspired by the victory gardens of World War II.*

During America's involvement in World War II (1941–1945), the Victory Garden Program strove to reduce demand for commercially grown vegetables, packaging materials, and transportation needs by encouraging Americans to grow their own produce and preserve and can their surplus harvest. This made more food and materials available for the armed forces and programs that supported America's Allies. By empowering people to grow their own food, victory gardens made Americans feel part of a greater cause.



Diana Hopkins, daughter of presidential advisor Harry Hopkins, tends the victory garden planted by first lady Eleanor Roosevelt on the South Lawn of the White House in 1943.  
Courtesy of the Associated Press



Courtesy of the Library of Congress

**Visit the *Within These Walls* exhibition on Floor 2 of the National Museum of American History** to explore the story of Mary Scott and her family, who planted a victory garden and preserved vegetables in Ipswich, Massachusetts, during World War II.





# Bringing the Outside In



## THE GREAT INDOORS

In spring 2020, Smithsonian Gardens opened the exhibit *The Great Indoors: Bringing the Outside In* at the Robert and Arlene Kogod Courtyard at the Smithsonian American Art Museum and National Portrait Gallery. The exhibit was part of Smithsonian Gardens' first campus-wide exhibition, *HABITAT*. It highlighted the many health benefits of connecting with nature and provided tips on how to bring elements of nature inside.

**Did You Know?** Imagine caring for a houseplant that's 25 feet tall! That's what Smithsonian Gardens horticulturists do every day. The black olive trees (*Terminalia buceras*) in the Robert and Arlene Kogod Courtyard are part of Smithsonian Gardens' Living Collection. They have a shallow root system that can adapt to the restrictive growing space that the planters present.

Many studies have found that just by taking a walk through a garden, a park, a forest, or simply observing plants in our indoor environments, we can improve our state of mind, our blood pressure, heart rate, and stress hormone levels. The benefits of houseplants are plenty, so it is wonderful to have a job that provides the public with the opportunity to experience them."



**VIRGINIA THAXTON**  
Horticulturist

Planters in the Kogod Courtyard from the *HABITAT* exhibition, *The Great Indoors: Bringing the Outside In*.





# Witness to History

## WITNESS TREE

In fall 2020, Smithsonian Gardens added to its series of Witness Tree interpretive panels. The latest tree featured is the Chinese hackberry located on the grounds of the Smithsonian American Art Museum and National Portrait Gallery. The tree has witnessed more than a century of change since it was planted in 1905.

*The Chinese hackberry (Celtis sinensis) outside of the Donald W. Reynolds Center for American Art and Portraiture.*

**Did You Know?** The Chinese hackberry (*Celtis sinensis*) is native to China, Korea, and Japan. It is a member of the hemp family (*Cannabaceae*), along with marijuana and hops.

“

As an accredited museum, our tree collection is foundational to our mission. As an arborist, I am excited to build a tree collection that increasingly showcases the diversity of woody plants. We use multiple interpretative strategies to engage visitors and audiences with our trees. Perhaps most excitingly, we acknowledge that our trees should interact with and enhance the American stories that our museums and gardens tell.”



**JAKE HENDEE**  
Arborist



# Habitats Near You

## HABITAT TRAVELING EXHIBITION

Smithsonian Gardens partnered with the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES) to create a scalable, build-it-yourself version of Smithsonian Gardens' campus-wide *HABITAT* exhibition. The exhibition opened at The Works: Ohio Center for History, Art & Technology in Newark, Ohio, in 2021. Museums and botanical gardens in Arkansas, Indiana, and Wisconsin will be hosting the exhibition in 2022.

*The HABITAT exhibition at The Works: Ohio Center for History, Art & Technology. Image courtesy of The Works: Ohio Center for History, Art & Technology.*





# Global Outreach

## POLLINATION INVESTIGATION TRAVELING EXHIBITION

In 2021, Smithsonian Gardens continued to share its mission with a global audience. The *Pollination Investigation* exhibition was displayed at the Tallinn Botanic Garden in Estonia for America Month in July and was later moved to the Tallinn Zoo.

The Pollination Investigation exhibition in Tallinn, Estonia.



“At Smithsonian Gardens, we must create content that speaks to our national and international audiences. Protecting pollinators and their habitats is an important message across the world. Thus, it was not a surprise when we started getting requests to share our Pollination Investigation interpretive panels from the U.S. Embassy in Tallin, Estonia, in 2021, following a successful display in 2018 in Slovenia. We are excited to share our outreach with others and look forward to additional opportunities to have a global impact in the future.”



**JAMES GAGLIARDI**  
Supervisory Horticulturist



# Education & Outreach

Flexibility is key to being successful in sharing skills and knowledge in fluctuating environments. The pandemic stretched SG's education and outreach program into the virtual world and introduced us to a whole new audience.

*Horticulturalist Sylvia Schmeichel engages young visitors at the Pollinator Party in the Pollinator Garden.*





# Virtual Events



In April 2021, the Let's Talk Gardens webinar "Beer in the Garden" explored the history and horticulture of hops and their role in defining American craft beer, with Theresa McCulla (far left), Eric Calhoun (left), and Keri Byrum (below).



## LET'S TALK GARDENS WEBINAR SERIES

During the COVID-19 pandemic, in-person public programs, including Smithsonian Gardens' popular *Let's Talk Gardens* series, were put on hold. The *Let's Talk Gardens* team quickly pivoted to an online webinar format. This allowed Smithsonian Gardens to reach more people than ever before, increasing from an average of 20 local attendees to a global audience of 150 to 400 people per presentation. In 2020 and 2021, more than 10,000 people watched SG's *Let's Talk Gardens* webinars. Videos of past presentations are also available to watch online.

LET'S TALK!  
GARDENS!

*Let's Talk Gardens* has given me the opportunity to connect with the gardening community and share my expertise with an enthusiastic audience. I've enjoyed the feedback from participants, and I am always thrilled to see how they've employed Smithsonian Gardens' techniques in their own gardens."

**MELINDA WHICHER**  
Supervisory Horticulturist and  
*Let's Talk Gardens* Presenter





**Right:** River birches (*Betula nigra*) in the Pollinator Garden from the virtual tour “Fall Foliage of Smithsonian Gardens.”  
**Below:** A view of the Tropical Greenhouse from the virtual “Behind-the-Scenes Tour of Smithsonian Greenhouses.”

## VIRTUAL TOURS

While in-person tours were on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Smithsonian Gardens created a series of immersive virtual tours. These include walking tours of Smithsonian Gardens, guides to the Tree and Orchid Collections, behind-the-scenes tours of the greenhouse facility, and a guide to using Smithsonian Gardens’ Plant Explorer. Tens of thousands of people have used these tours to learn about the Smithsonian’s plants, gardens, and landscapes.







**Far left:** Woman with climbing Emily Gray roses at Breeze Hill in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, ca. 1923. From the Smithsonian Institution, Archives of American Gardens, J. Horace McFarland Company Collection. **Left:** Smithsonian Gardens' website features profiles of eight female horticultural heroes, including Ethel Earley Clark, a community activist and gardener.



## WOMEN'S HISTORY IN THE GARDEN

With the generous support of the Smithsonian's American Women's History Initiative, Smithsonian Gardens created a series of online resources highlighting women's contributions to gardening, landscape design, and plant sciences. These include videos, a timeline, illustrated profiles, and Smithsonian Learning Lab collections. Smithsonian Gardens also used #HorticultureHERstory on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to highlight more tales of groundbreaking women.



The funds we were awarded enabled us to contribute to the pan-institutional American Women's History Initiative in a meaningful way. Not only were we able to share individual stories about women represented in our collections, but we were able bring their collective stories together into eight videos with topics ranging from women garden designers to women leading change through garden clubs."



**KELLY CRAWFORD**  
Museum Specialist





## THE GARDEN GATE

In 2021, Smithsonian Gardens launched a new interview series called *The Garden Gate*. The series features interviews with guests from a variety of garden-related careers, including urban farming and youth gardens. We hope to inspire a new generation of students to join careers related to gardening and demonstrate that they can create sustainable change in our world.



**Right:** Participants of The Garden Gate interview series include (from top left to bottom right), Eboni Preston, Ryan Gooch, Sydney Spencer, Phillip Evich, and Zannah Porter. | **Far right:** The Renwick Gate at the entrance to the Enid A. Haupt Garden.







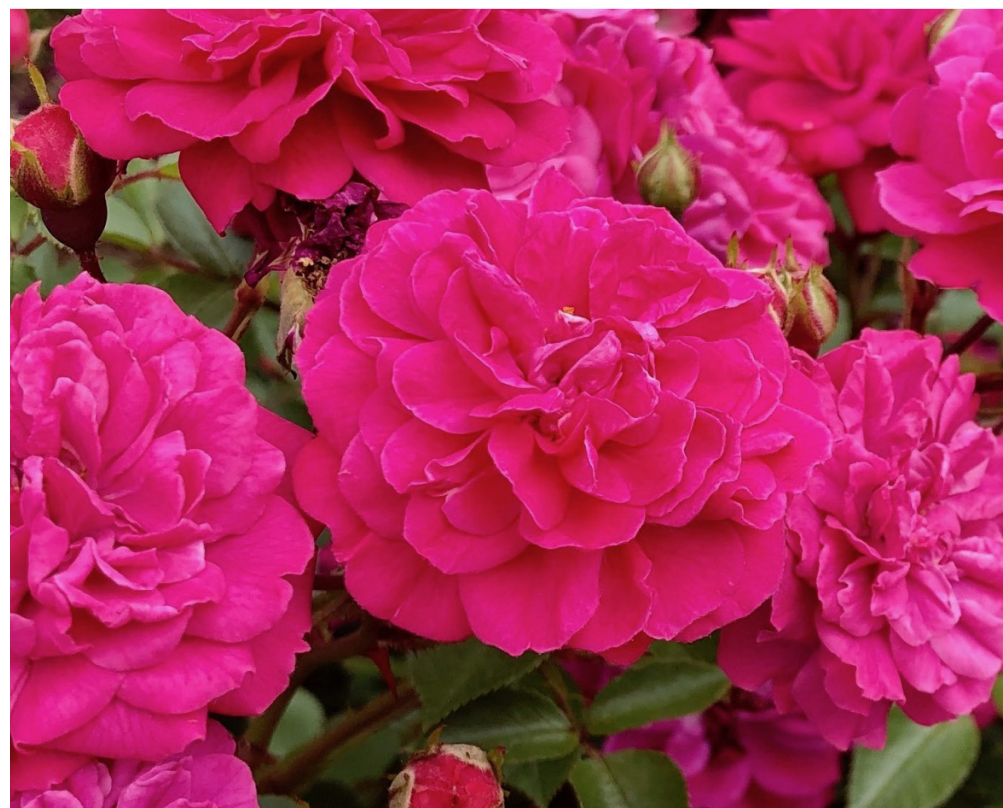
**Left:** This image of a black swallowtail caterpillar on parsley (*Petroselinum crispum*) in the Pollinator Garden is available as a Smithsonian Gardens digital background. | **Below:** Roses featured in the blog post "Caring for Roses at Home."

## SMITHSONIAN GARDENS BLOG

Throughout 2020 and 2021, Smithsonian Gardens staff engaged visitors with a variety of blog posts offering gardening tips and highlighting interesting items in the collections.

## SMITHSONIAN GARDENS DIGITAL BACKGROUNDS

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many people were looking for inspirational backgrounds to use for their virtual meetings or desktops. Smithsonian Gardens answered the call with a variety of photos showcasing the gardens in different seasons.





## POLLINATION INVESTIGATION POSTERS

Thanks to a generous grant from the Smithsonian Women's Committee, Smithsonian Gardens was able to collaborate with the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service to distribute one thousand Pollination Investigation posters to schools within the United States.

This is a great set. We are in the process of creating a pollinator garden at our school, so it was very beneficial.”

MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER  
Winchester, VA





# Social Media

Social media enables Smithsonian Gardens to teach people about plants, showcase our living collections, tell stories, and highlight blooming or interesting plants. With three platforms, we can reach a local, national, and worldwide audiences, which allows our staff to connect with people who might not be able to visit in person.

*Clockwise from top left: Horticulturists Shelley Gaskins and James Gagliardi created this display in the Enid A. Haupt Garden to thank Smithsonian Gardens' 100,000 Instagram followers. | In March 2020, a tulip Instagram post received almost 3,000 likes. | Using the hashtag #SGPhotoChallenge, Smithsonian Gardens encourages everyone to take and post photos of their surrounding gardens and landscapes. | In February 2021, the Smithsonian Gardens Orchid Collection took over Smithsonian Gardens' social media channels.*



“One of our biggest accomplishments over the past two years has been to gain over 100,000 followers on Instagram. It has been an honor to lead the social media program for Smithsonian Gardens—from working with my coworkers to highlight their passions and hard work, building new relationships through collaboration with other Smithsonian units and to connecting with our followers.”

**SARAH TIETBOHL**  
Social Media Coordinator



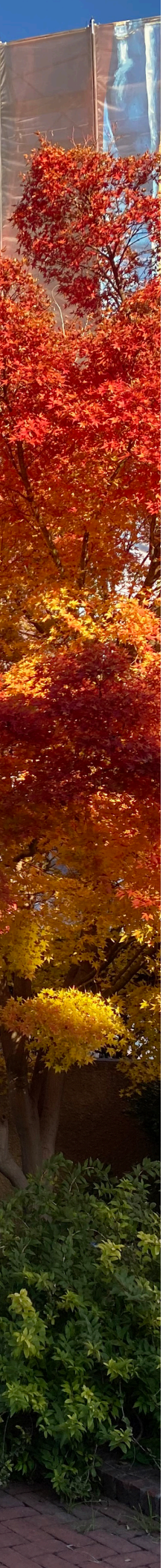
**Right:** The Saucer Magnolias (*Magnolia x soulangeana*) begin to bloom. | **Far right:** Every year, the beautiful pink blooms of the Saucer Magnolias in the Enid A. Haupt Garden celebrate the start of spring at Smithsonian Gardens.

## MAGNOLIA MADNESS

In March 2021, Smithsonian Gardens’ “Magnolia Madness” social media posts received six million hits.

**Did You Know?** With their bright, early flowering blooms, ranging from white to pink to cream yellow, magnolias are a classic celebration of spring. But did you know these plants are some of the oldest flowers on the planet? They have been blooming for nearly 100 million years.





**Lonnie G. Bunch III** @SmithsonianSec · Aug 17, 2020

We welcome you to safely stroll our outdoor @SIGardens or show up to your next video call with a **Smithsonian Gardens** digital background: [s.si.edu/326EZKi](https://s.si.edu/326EZKi)



1 9 86



**Lonnie G. Bunch III** @SmithsonianSec · Mar 15, 2021

A cloud of pink surrounds the **Smithsonian** Castle in early spring, raising spirits. Imagine you're strolling through our Enid A. Haupt **Garden** with #MagnoliaMadness from @SIGardens.



**Smithsonian Gardens** @SIGardens · Mar 15, 2021

Each spring the beautiful pink blooms of our saucer magnolias (*Magnolia x soulangeana*) in the Enid A. Haupt Garden celebrate the start of spring at Smithsonian Gardens. The saucer magnolias are part of our Tree Collection which contains a dozen other varieties of magnolias.

[Show this thread](#)



13 65



**Lonnie G. Bunch III** @SmithsonianSec · Mar 1

In addition to a new indoor exhibition, our @SIGardens team offers a museum without walls in over 180 acres of outdoor **gardens**. They make the **Smithsonian** beautiful in all seasons and engage audiences with topics such as climate change and habitat preservation.

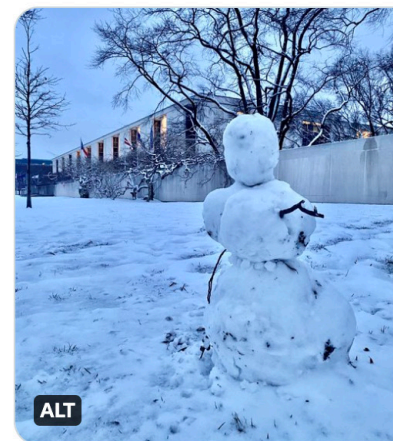


2 8 35



**Lonnie G. Bunch III** @SmithsonianSec · Feb 3, 2021

One of our @SIGardens horticulturists made the best of our snowy weather. On cold days, I'm especially grateful for the teams who care for our **Smithsonian** buildings and **gardens**. Thanks for your hard work and for the smile!



3 36 271

## SECRETARY BUNCH'S TWEETS

Smithsonian Secretary Lonnie G. Bunch III has been a strong supporter of Smithsonian Gardens on social media.

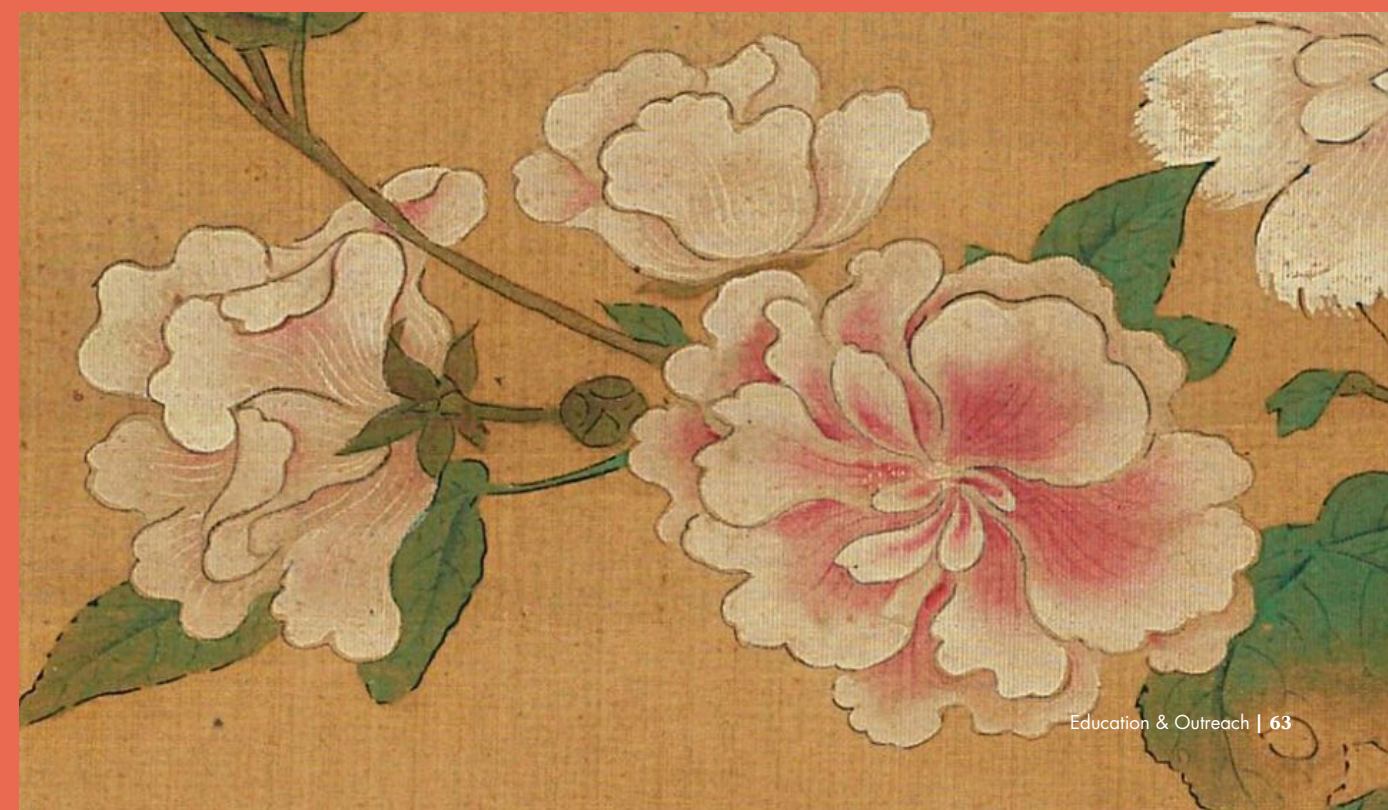


**Clockwise from top left:** A Let's Dance Rhythmic Blue hydrangea paired with the artwork Sparrow and blue-white hortensia by Ohara Koson. | A tropical hibiscus paired with the artwork A branch of flowering hibiscus by Kano Tan'yu'. | A dwarf pomegranate (Punica granatum 'Nana') paired with the artwork Parrot On Pomegranate Branch by Ito Sozan.



## FLOWER FRIDAYS

In July 2020, Smithsonian Gardens partnered with the National Museum of Asian Art on “Flower Friday,” a social media collaboration that paired plants with artworks.





# collaborations

**In 2020 and 2021,  
Smithsonian  
Gardens widened  
its reach through  
a range of  
partnerships with  
Smithsonian units  
and community  
organizations.**

*Mushroom sculpture by Foon Sham outside the National  
Museum of American History.*







# Partnering with the Smithsonian

With roots across the National Mall and beyond, Smithsonian Gardens supports the Smithsonian's strategic goal to "Be One Smithsonian." In 2020 and 2021, Smithsonian Gardens collaborated with a variety of Smithsonian partners on exhibitions, programs, and Smithsonian-wide initiatives.



## COIN-OPERATED WETLAND

Smithsonian Gardens collaborated with the Smithsonian Arts & Industries Building and artist Tega Brain on the artwork *Coin-Operated Wetland* in the *FUTURES* exhibition. The artwork combines a laundromat with a wetland system. Smithsonian Gardens provided the substrate and aquatic plants for the artwork and helped install and maintain it.



## FLYING GARDENS OF MAYBE

In 2020, Smithsonian Gardens collaborated with the National Museum of Natural History and artist Andrew S. Yang on the artwork *Flying Gardens of Maybe* in the exhibition *Unsettled Nature: Artists Reflect on the Age of Humans*. The artwork features plants grown from seeds collected from the stomachs of birds that died by colliding with buildings.

**Left:** Horticulturalist Virginia Thaxton, tends to plants in the Coin-operated Wetland. | **Above:** Plants growing in the Flying Gardens of Maybe display.



**Right:** ReWildAR offers a vision of how the city can be rewilded to create a thriving, sustainable environment for nature. | **Below:** Cover, Life magazine, September 27, 1943.

## AUGMENTED REALITY GARDEN

Smithsonian Gardens Plant Health Specialist Holly Walker worked with artists Tamiko Thiel and Peter Graf (also known as p/) on the ReWildAR augmented reality installation in the *FUTURES* exhibition.

## THE WOMEN'S LAND ARMY

In February 2020, Smithsonian Gardens partnered with the National Museum of American History to create a conversation kit for middle schoolers about the Women's Land Army. During World War II, women and girls in the Land Army worked on farms and in canneries to help feed the nation.





# Community of Collaboration

In addition to internal Smithsonian partnerships, Smithsonian Gardens collaborated with community organizations on a variety of projects.



Smithsonian Gardens Director Joy Columbus (center left) with members of the Washington Spirit soccer team; Koji Tomita, Japanese Ambassador to the United States; and Diana Mayhew, President of the National Cherry Blossom Festival. The sculpture is Blossoms on the Mall by Jaleel Davis.

## ART IN BLOOM

In 2021, Smithsonian Gardens hosted three sculptures in the Enid A. Haupt Garden in celebration of the National Cherry Blossom Festival. The sculptures were sponsored by the Embassy of Japan and commissioned from local artists.

**Did You Know?** Washington, D.C. is famed for its Japanese cherry trees, planted around the Tidal Basin. But not too long ago, this same area would have been full of the North American native wild cherry tree, *Prunus serotina*. You can still find this native plant on the margins of roadsides and woods, like in Rock Creek Park. The dark red wood and sour cherries have a deep, fragrant aroma.



*Right: One of the stamps featuring the collections of Smithsonian Gardens. | Below: Roses in bloom at the Kathrine Dulin Folger Rose Garden at the Arts & Industries Building.*



## 'BEST OF SMITHSONIAN' STAMP COLLECTION

To celebrate the Smithsonian's 175th anniversary in 2021, Philatelic Mint launched a "Best of Smithsonian" stamp collection with stamps depicting Smithsonian Gardens' collections.

## GO PUBLIC GARDENS DAYS

In May 2021, Smithsonian Gardens participated in the Go Public Gardens Days, a nationwide campaign to encourage the public to visit, value, and volunteer at public gardens.





## POLLINATOR HABITATS

Since 2019, Smithsonian Gardens has partnered with Washington, D.C.'s Golden Triangle Business Improvement District to create pollinator habitats in local parks. Participating buildings in the neighborhood also created pollinator-friendly gardens in hundreds of tree boxes.



I love that our Smithsonian gardens on the National Mall are able to provide visitors and locals with beauty and an escape from the hustle and bustle, as well as providing pollinators and wildlife with critical sources of food and shelter. It has been my honor and joy to extend just some of that experience and inspiration to help pollinators to our neighbors in other parts of the city through this partnership.”



**SARAH DICKERT**  
Horticulturist



Poinsettias are my favorite crop to grow. There is something very rewarding about an entire greenhouse full of colorful plants to get everyone in the holiday mood. Even though we were unable to display our crop in 2020, I very much enjoyed sharing the poinsettias with everyone though the virtual tour.”

**JILL GONZALEZ**  
Production Horticulturalist

Poinsettias growing in Smithsonian Gardens' greenhouse facility.

## POINSETTIA DONATIONS

Every year, Smithsonian Gardens grows around 2,000 poinsettias to display in Smithsonian museums during the holiday season. With Smithsonian museums closed in December 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Smithsonian Gardens donated surplus poinsettias to local nonprofits. Smithsonian Gardens also launched a behind-the-scenes virtual tour of the poinsettia production greenhouse.

**Did You Know?** Poinsettias are the best-selling potted plant in North America. They are named for Joel Poinsett, an amateur botanist and the first U.S. ambassador to Mexico. Poinsett sent specimens of this plant to the U.S. in the 1820s.



# Sustainability & Resilience

Smithsonian Gardens is committed to advancing sustainability at the Smithsonian and creating healthy and resilient gardens.

The insect hotel at the Mary Livingston Ripley Garden. Plants seen here include *Penstemon digitalis* 'Pocahontas', *Nepeta*, *Monarda bradburianum*, *Geranium* 'Rozanne', and *Allium*.





**Right:** In March 2021, Smithsonian Gardens Horticulturist Shelley Gaskins led a Let's Talk Gardens webinar about earth-friendly rose gardening. **Below:** In summer 2020, Smithsonian Gardens Plant Health Specialist Holly Walker led a Let's Talk Gardens webinar about making homes for native bees. Seen here, a bee visits a flower in the Mary Livingston Ripley Garden.

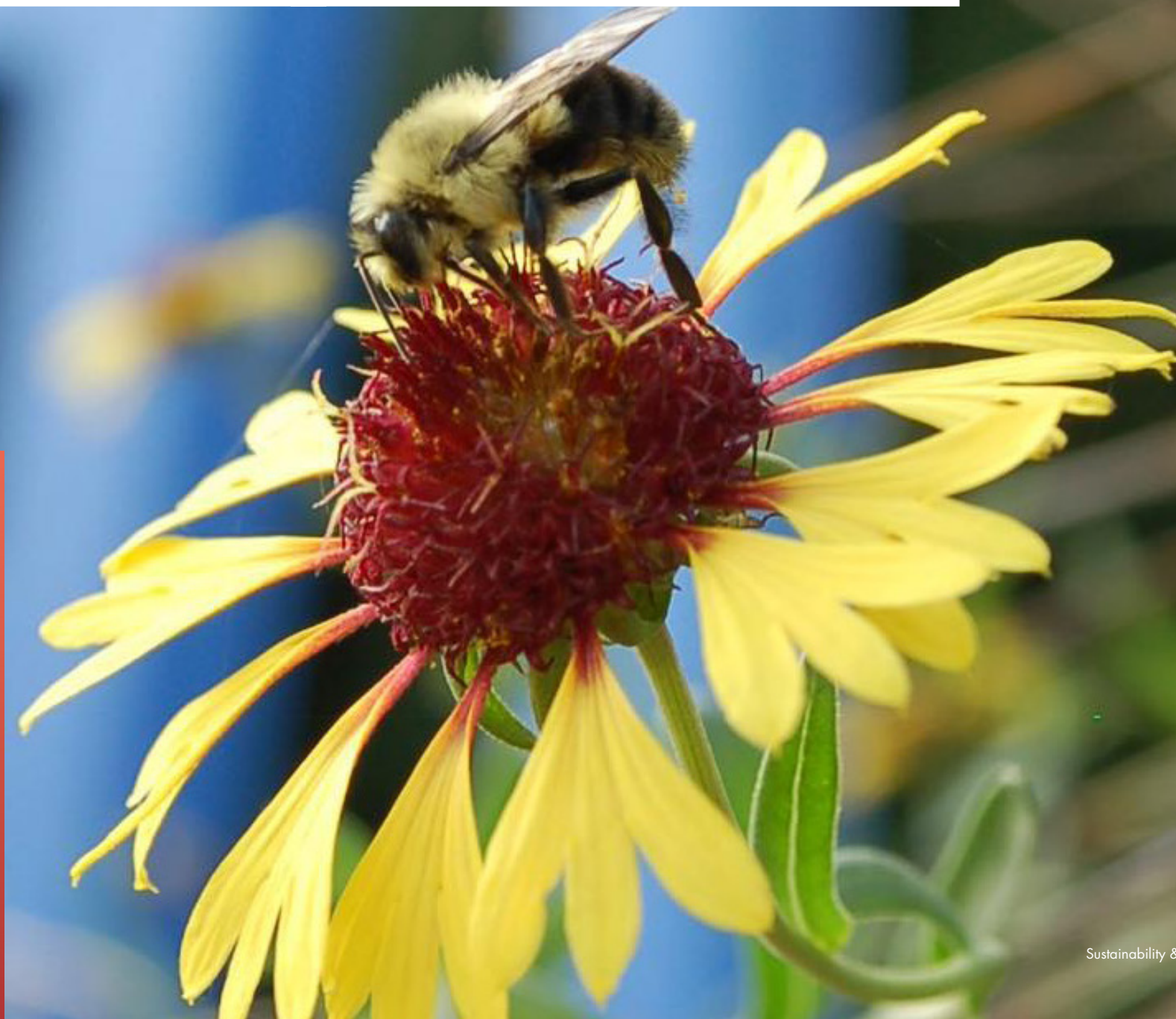


## SUSTAINABILITY OUTREACH

Through our programs, exhibitions, and outreach efforts, Smithsonian Gardens educates the public about the benefits of sustainability. In 2020 and 2021, Smithsonian Gardens hosted several programs about sustainability issues, including carbon dioxide levels in the capital region, earth-friendly rose gardens, making homes for native bees, and growing native edibles.

The Smithsonian has an unparalleled capacity to produce, curate and communicate science to a broad public. But we also have a duty to give hope. By empowering our audiences with critical information and the confidence to act, we can pursue a shared, sustainable future for all.”

**LONNIE G. BUNCH III**  
Secretary, Smithsonian Institution







Ecologist Marc Rosenfield installs a carbon cycling sensor outside the U.S. Capitol building. Photo by Megan Wilkerson.

## CARBON IN THE CAPITAL

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Smithsonian Gardens partnered with the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center and ecologist Marc Rosenfield to collect carbon dioxide readings in the gardens. Rosenfield and his team are studying how changes in human activity during the pandemic affected carbon dioxide levels.

Marc Rosenfield is analyzing the data to see how photosynthesis, urban planning, and traffic changes have affected carbon dioxide cycling in and out of the atmosphere. This study during the pandemic offered a rare opportunity for Marc to observe how the environment reacts to drops in human activity."

**HOLLY WALKER**  
Plant Health Specialist





**Right:** A songbird nest nestled in our gardens. | **Below:** Close-up of Smithsonian Gardens' pollinator lawn at the National Museum of Natural History.



## POLLINATOR LAWN

In 2021, Smithsonian Gardens unveiled a new pollinator lawn on the grounds of the National Museum of Natural History. Pollinator lawns are made up of grass and low-growing flowering plants. They help attract pollinators and are more environmentally friendly than grass lawns.

## AUDUBON COOPERATIVE SANCTUARY PROGRAM

Since 2014, Smithsonian Gardens has been certified by the Audubon Cooperative Sanctuary Program, which rates the environmental protection measures taken by organizations and businesses on their grounds.



We wanted to shift away from the traditional, chemically dependent turf and strive for a sustainable alternative. So we created a pollinator lawn: a blend of tall fescue, clover, self-heal, and creeping thyme applied to our existing turf.”



**SYLVIA SCHMEICHEL**  
Horticulturist



# Recognition

**Smithsonian  
Gardens is honored  
to have been  
recognized for its  
achievements over  
the past two years.**

*Echinacea and liatris blooming in the Woodland Garden  
at the National Museum of American History.*





**Right:** The Garden Club of America's Distinguished Service Medal awarded to the Archives of American Gardens. |  
**Bottom:** Arches of Life sculpture by Foon Sham outside the National Museum of American History, part of the Smithsonian Gardens award-winning HABITAT exhibition.



## DISTINGUISHED SERVICE MEDAL

In May 2020, the Archives of American Gardens received the Distinguished Service Medal in the field of horticulture from The Garden Club of America. The award recognized the Archives as “a priceless treasure documenting America’s gardens.”

## SPECIAL ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

In April 2020, Smithsonian Gardens received the Smithsonian Excellence in Exhibitions Special Achievement Award for the campus-wide exhibition *HABITAT*. The Smithsonian Excellence in Exhibitions award program recognizes outstanding work in the field of exhibitions and acknowledges the dedication and creativity of exhibition staff throughout the institution.





# Media Coverage

In 2020 and 2021, Smithsonian Gardens received coverage in a range of local and national publications, from *Washington Gardener* to *National Geographic*.



## WASHINGTON POST

Smithsonian Gardens Plant Health Specialist Holly Walker contributed tips to the June 2020 *Washington Post* article “A quarantine project that's a win for you, your garden and pollinators: A bee house.”

## VERANDA

In July 2020, *VERANDA* magazine listed Smithsonian Gardens as one of “15 Museums with Gardens as Impressive as Their Art Collections.”

## WASHINGTON GARDENER

*Washington Gardener's* December 2020 issue featured images by Smithsonian Gardens Supervisory Horticulturist James Gagliardi in the article “The Beauty of Bark: Focusing on the Textures and Color of Winter.”

## NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

In January 2021, *National Geographic* featured advice from Smithsonian Gardens horticulturists Shannon Hill and Alexandra Thompson in an article on indoor gardening for families.

*Clockwise from top left: Bee house in winter at the Mary Livingston Ripley Garden. | Horticulturist Shannon Hill (left) and Horticulturist Alexandra Thompson (right). | Tulips in the Enid A. Haupt Garden.*



# Our Team

Whether out in the gardens or behind the scenes our staff work diligently to fulfill our mission.

Horticulturalists Matt Fleming and Michael Riordan repotting a Mussaenda plant from SG tropical plant collection.





# New Staff Members

In 2020 and 2021, Smithsonian Gardens welcomed several new staff members to our team.



The Pathways Program attracted me to Smithsonian Gardens because I wanted an opportunity to feel like a student again in horticulture. The freedom to learn from every gardener on staff, ask questions, observe, and practice my own skills at the finest museums in the world is a privilege I could only dream of as a recent graduate.”

**PHILIP EVICH**  
Pathways Horticulturist

## 2020

- 1. Joy Columbus**  
Director
- 2. Melinda Whicher**  
Supervisory Horticulturist
- 3. Christian Sherlock**  
Engineering Technician — Irrigation

## 2021

- 4. Lauren Brandes**  
Landscape Architect
- 5. Allison Griffith**  
Biological Sciences Technician
- 5. Stash Miller**  
Biological Sciences Technician
- 6. Philip Evich**  
Pathways Horticulturist



# Departures

In 2020 and 2021, we bid farewell to colleagues who served Smithsonian Gardens for many years.



1

## 2020

**1. Ed Kunickis**  
Entomologist  
*Length of service: 23 years*

## 2021

**2. Randy Dudley**  
Biological Sciences Technician  
*Length of service: 42 years*

**3. Daniel Russell**  
Administrator  
*Length of service: 31 years*



3



# Staff Awards

Biomes exhibit in the S. Dillon Ripley Center, part of the HABITAT exhibition.

## 2020 SMITHSONIAN FACILITIES DIRECTOR'S AWARD WINNERS

### Outstanding Contribution

Sarah Tietbohl

### Behind-the-Scenes Wonder

Matthew Huber

## 2020 SMITHSONIAN FACILITIES PEER AWARD WINNER

Sarah Tietbohl

## 2021 SMITHSONIAN FACILITIES PEER AWARD WINNERS

Allison Dineen

Vanessa Garner

## 2021 SMITHSONIAN FACILITIES DIRECTOR'S AWARD WINNERS

### Notable Newcomer

Philip Evich

### Behind-the-Scenes Hero

Sarah Tietbohl

### Outstanding Contribution from a Team (*Sustainability Index Audit Team*)

Sarah Hedean, Shannon Hill, Holly Walker, Shelley Gaskins, Debra Austin, Alex Dencker, Virginia Thaxton, Philip Evich

### Outstanding Contribution from a Team (*Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden*)\*

Marisa Scalera

\*This team included additional non-Smithsonian Gardens awardees.



# Behind the Scenes

In addition to its public-facing work, Smithsonian Gardens plays an important role in supporting Smithsonian museums and initiatives behind the scenes.



**Left:** Production Horticulturalist Jill Gonzalez tends plants in the greenhouse. | **Below:** Smithsonian Gardens Arborist Jake Hendee checks soil conditions during the installation of the National Native American Veterans Memorial.

## GREENHOUSE FACILITY

Smithsonian Gardens greenhouse staff, grow plants for Smithsonian Gardens' interior and exterior spaces.

## NATIONAL NATIVE AMERICAN VETERANS MEMORIAL

Smithsonian Gardens played an important role in the planning and construction of the National Native American Veterans memorial at the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, D.C. This included ensuring that the forest canopy was maintained and that none of the heavy construction equipment damaged tree roots.





**Right:** Smithsonian Gardens staff reviewing the construction of the new Flight Garden as part of the National Air and Space Museum revitalization project. | **Below:** Smithsonian Gardens' administration team, Vanessa Garner (left), Sherri Manning (middle), Darlene Price (right).

## NATIONAL AIR AND SPACE MUSEUM

The multi-year renovation of the National Air and Space Museum includes the construction of a new Flight Garden.

## SMITHSONIAN GARDENS' ADMINISTRATION TEAM

Smithsonian Gardens' fabulous administration team, including Sherri Manning, Vanessa Garner, and Darlene Price, keep all of our projects running smoothly.





# Internships

For the first time, Smithsonian Gardens welcomed virtual interns from across the country to assist with digital projects in 2020 and 2021.

“We initially thought we should cancel the Archives of American Gardens summer internship program for 2020, but we were urged to reconsider since so many in-person internships were being canceled across the country. We retooled the intern’s projects to focus solely on tasks that lent themselves to remote work: cataloging, digital asset management, and education and outreach projects. It worked out so well that we hosted another virtual intern in the summer of 2021.”

**KELLY CRAWFORD**  
Museum Specialist



## ALANNA NATANSON

Alanna Natanson, a master’s student in public history at North Carolina State University, joined Smithsonian Gardens’ Archives of American Gardens for a virtual internship in 2020. Alanna updated catalog records, curated a Smithsonian Learning Lab collection, reviewed and approved volunteer-generated transcriptions, and prepared blog posts and social media posts.

## TAYLOR ELYEA

Taylor Elyea, a master’s student in art and museum studies at Georgetown University, joined Smithsonian Gardens’ Archives of American Gardens for a virtual internship in 2021. Taylor cataloged photographic materials, managed digital assets, generated an online finding aide for researchers, and prepared a range of outreach materials for the public.

**Left:** Marble Garden, part of the Women’s Wartime Gardens Learning Lab curated by intern Taylor Elyea. **Above:** Interns Alanna Natanson (left) and Taylor Elyea (right).



# Volunteers

Special thanks to each and every one of Smithsonian Gardens' volunteers for the valuable work they accomplished in 2020 and 2021. We greatly appreciate the support of our dedicated volunteers!

*Above center:* Orchid collection volunteer Ronni Lodato working in the greenhouse. | *Above right:* Greenhouse production volunteer Laurel Weesman at work. | *Right:* Garden maintenance volunteers working in the Enid A. Haupt Garden.



“Volunteers support Smithsonian Gardens staff, planting the seed of inspiration whether it is in the garden, greenhouse, in our collections, or through educational programming, which supports our mission to engage, inform, and inspire.”



**PAULA HEALY**  
Museum Specialist



# Funding

In addition to funding that is federally appropriated by the U.S. Congress, Smithsonian Gardens receives much of its operating funds from its parent organization, Smithsonian Facilities. Additional funding comes from endowments, donations, royalties and licensing.

*A foggy morning at the Kathrine Dulin Folger  
Rose Garden*





# Donors & Grants

Smithsonian Gardens' fundraising activities in FY2020 and FY2021 continued to grow and were banner years for securing grants to support Smithsonian Gardens' work.



## REMEMBERING WILLIAM “BILL” HOPKINS

Longtime Smithsonian Gardens supporter William “Bill” Hopkins passed away in 2020. Hopkins was an enthusiastic supporter of gardens and the arts. His generous legacy gift will allow Smithsonian Gardens to continue its important work.

*Above: Bill Hopkins (seated) with former Smithsonian Gardens Director Barbara Faust and Horticulturist Joe Brunetti at a Food in the Garden event. | Left: Garden phlox outside of the National Air and Space Museum.*



*Panicle Hydrangea, Hydrangea paniculata 'Chantilly Lace' blooming in the garden at the National Museum of African American History and Culture.*

## SMITHSONIAN NATIONAL COLLECTIONS PROGRAM

Smithsonian Gardens received several generous grants from the Smithsonian National Collections Program in 2020 and 2021. These grants enabled Smithsonian Gardens to care for its collections and make them available to researchers and the public.

The projects funded included:

**DESCRIBING** thousands of recently digitized images in the Archives of American Gardens.

**DEVELOPING** a comprehensive campus-wide Soils Management Plan to support the Smithsonian Gardens Tree Collection.

**ASSESSING** the Smithsonian Gardens Orchid Collection for virus disease infection.

**CONDUCTING** an inventory and condition assessment of the Smithsonian Gardens Display Collection.

**ENHANCING** storage and housing conditions for the Smithsonian Gardens Orchid Collection.







**Left:** *Cattleya purpurata* 'Amazonia Orchids'. **Below:** Hannele Lahti photographs the Smithsonian Gardens Orchid Collection.

## SMITHSONIAN COLLECTIONS INFORMATION SYSTEM AND OFFICE OF THE CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER

Generous grants from the Smithsonian Collections Information System Pool Fund and the Smithsonian's Office of the Chief Information Officer supported the digitization of Smithsonian Gardens' Living Display Collection. This will help make the collection more accessible to researchers and the public.

## SMITHSONIAN'S PROVOST OFFICE

A generous grant from the Smithsonian's Provost Office helped Smithsonian Gardens customize its collections information system to participate in the launch of the Smithsonian Open Access project.

## SMITHSONIAN WOMEN'S COMMITTEE

Smithsonian Gardens received a generous grant from the Smithsonian Women's Committee to distribute one thousand *Pollination Investigation* posters to schools within the United States.



# Support Smithsonian Gardens

## DONATE

Giving to Smithsonian Gardens makes things grow! Exhibitions. Education. Collections. Gardens. Beautiful, exhilarating spaces that provide delight and inspiration to millions of visitors to the Smithsonian museums in Washington, D.C., each year. Your tax-deductible gift helps us develop green thumbs, green spaces, and green ideas.

## VOLUNTEER

Volunteers are essential to our mission. Each year, our volunteers donate their time to help in virtually every garden and department to care for our collections and enhance the Smithsonian visitor experience.

## SHARE YOUR STORY

Smithsonian Gardens' Community of Gardens is a digital archive where gardeners of all backgrounds can share their stories. Whether it's the story of your own or a neighborhood community garden, the memory of your grandmother's garden, or a plant that plays an important role in your life, we want to hear—and see—your garden stories!

**Right:** *Amsonia hubrichtii* and *Allium* 'Gladiator' blooming adjacent to the Hirshhorn Museum Sculpture Garden. | **Back**

**Cover:** Mary Livingston Ripley Garden. Plants seen here include, *Tulipa* 'Flair', *Blue Pansies*, *Triple Curled Parsley*, *Brassica* 'Red Giant', *Fritillaria imperialis*, and *Yucca rostrata*.







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