FROM THE SMITHSONIAN GARDENS DIRECTOR

Smithsonian Gardens (SG) is a vital and vibrant part of the Smithsonian experience. To fulfill our mission we engage people with plants and gardens, inform them about the roles that both play in our cultural and natural worlds, and inspire appreciation and stewardship. Established in 1972, Smithsonian Gardens in its 50-year history has grown from a small landscape management organization to a public garden of distinction as well as an American Alliance of Museums accredited museum.

Prior to the global pandemic outbreak in 2020, Smithsonian Gardens had accomplished many of the goals outlined in its Strategic Plan (2017-2021), including the opening of an award-winning campus-wide exhibition, HABITAT, and hosting the American Public Gardens Association’s Annual Conference in 2019. The organization - and society as a whole - experienced great challenges at the end of this planning timeframe. Faced with a global pandemic, our intrepid staff members pivoted to online programming to continue engaging visitors with plants. We safeguarded our beautiful gardens and one-of-a-kind collections despite the closure of the many Smithsonian museums. Amid the pandemic, we experienced leadership change: I joined Smithsonian Gardens as its new Director in 2020, following the retirement of our long-serving leader Barbara Faust.

This Bridge Plan (2022-2024) builds on the momentum of Smithsonian Gardens’ Strategic Plan (2017-2021), giving us the time and space to complete important objectives. With this Bridge Plan in place, we will complete our highest priority goals: launching our master planning process and interpretive planning processes, enhancing our collections, continuing to raise the visibility of Smithsonian Gardens, and building a fundraising program. Most importantly, the Bridge Plan builds a strong foundation for our next strategic plan in 2025.

With the help of outstanding staff, I am excited to catapult Smithsonian Gardens to even greater levels with our future strategic plan. I am deeply appreciative of the support from Smithsonian Institution leadership, the Smithsonian Gardens leadership team, and every Smithsonian Gardens staff member. The next two years will fly by.

Joy Columbus
Director

TRANSFORMATIVE GOALS

GOAL 1
A PUBLIC GARDEN WITH A GLOBAL IMPACT

GOAL 2
A MUSEUM WITH A BROADLY RECOGNIZED MISSION

GOAL 3
AN INSTITUTION WITH THE RESOURCES TO MEET ITS VISION AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES
Objective 1.1: Create beautiful, inspiring and educational garden exhibits that enliven the Smithsonian campus (both exterior and interior) and deepen the awareness, understanding and appreciation of plants and gardens.

Strategy 1.1.1 Create a comprehensive multi-year plan for the upgrade/renovation of gardens and the development of exhibits that integrates the goals of Smithsonian Gardens and the Smithsonian Institution’s museums.

Strategy 1.1.2 Commission a plan for development, design, placement, and installation of permanent and temporary exhibits within Smithsonian Gardens.

Objective 1.2: Create a common understanding of SG’s assets and programs as they relate to SG’s overall effectiveness as a public garden and living museum.

Strategy 1.2.1 Increase the impact of the Archives of American Gardens and the Community of Gardens as nationally recognized garden history resources.

Strategy 1.2.2 Define the value of SG’s Garden Furnishings and Horticultural Artifact Collection.

Objective 1.3 Expand Smithsonian Gardens’ contributions to science and scholarship.

Strategy 1.3.1 Strengthen the existing SG Orchid Collection.

Strategy 1.3.2 Expand participation in the North American Orchid Conservation Center (NAOCC).

Strategy 1.3.3 Define, build and articulate the value of Smithsonian Gardens’ living collections as a resource for scientific study.
Objective 2.1: Dramatically raise the visibility of Smithsonian Gardens.

Strategy 2.1.1 Be readily recognized as a Smithsonian museum.

Strategy 2.1.2 Promote the visual identity of Smithsonian Gardens on the Smithsonian campus and elsewhere.
Objective 3.1: Create a strong fundraising program that substantially augments SG’s revenues.

Strategy 3.1.1 Conduct a feasibility study in collaboration with the Office of Advancement’s (OA) Strategy and Member Experience Division to develop an “Affinity Membership Program” offered to SG’s members, whereby existing members are invited to establish an affinity for a fee.

Strategy 3.1.2 Develop an ‘Affinity Member’ pilot program if OA’s feasibility study determines that is attainable.

Objective 3.2. Develop and implement a long-term staffing plan to support Smithsonian Gardens’ mission, vision, and Strategic Plan in balance with its core functions.

Strategy 3.2.1 Support staff development and align positions with strategic goals.

Strategy 3.2.2 Investigate and execute hiring actions that secure staff in a timely manner and increase the diversity of highly qualified candidates.
While the Bridge Plan will keep Smithsonian Gardens focused over the next two years, additional long-range planning is necessary to keep us moving forward beyond that timeframe. The following 10 Year Planning Guide identifies key planning and exhibition efforts through 2032. Establishing target dates will facilitate planning for staffing and funding needs for each of the initiatives.

The Bridge Plan and strategic planning efforts charted below are intended to establish goals and strategies as we move forward. A new Comprehensive Plan will embody how SG’s goals and strategies can actually be manifested in our gardens. This Comprehensive Plan will establish how we can focus on specific projects to achieve our long-term goals and plan for staffing and funding necessary to meet those goals.