

2024 Annual Report



Naples
Botanical
Garden™

From our Leadership

This past year, 2024, was a big one for us.

How big? Try 60,000 square feet. That's the size of the Evenstad Horticulture Campus, the Garden's bold new venture, dedicated last January. Our team previously had mastered the art of growing plants with the most basic of facilities—shade cloth, open-air nurseries, a rudimentary greenhouse. Now, we have the pleasure of working with top-end equipment in a custom-designed complex. After spending most of the year learning and mastering greenhouse operations, we are ready to unleash our new growing capabilities in 2025.

And talk about growth: Together with our partners at American Farms, we grew tens of thousands of beach dune plants.



Our staff has researched dune ecosystems, determined the plants needed for healthy, resilient dunes, and collected seeds and cuttings of those species. In late 2024, Collier County authorized a 13-mile dune restoration project. It calls for the Garden's recommended plant palette, and the project's contractor is incorporating native species grown from material we collected. This is but one example of how your support helps us to support our community.

There is so much more to celebrate. In this report, you'll learn about fascinating new plants we've collected and put on display, expanded educational opportunities for all ages, and new initiatives for Members—coffee breaks, anyone?

I hope you enjoy this look back at the accomplishments of 2024, celebrate your role in making them happen, and share my excitement for a new season of growth in 2025.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'D. McGinnis'.

Donna McGinnis
President & CEO





The Garden has always been a special place for the Kapnick family, and I am honored to have chaired the Board of Directors since 2022. As my tenure comes to a close, I find myself reflecting on these last three years. What a whirlwind! Construction began on the Evenstad Horticulture Campus in early 2022, Hurricane Ian hit later that year, tourism temporarily crashed, and two more hurricanes hit us last summer.

But the Garden, as always, perseveres.

None of our accomplishments are possible without all of you and your commitment to the Garden. The Garden's membership base is over 15,000 households strong, including the more than 600 who comprise the Royal Palm Society. You can find that



list on page 27. And a special thank you to our Garden Visionaries, those who give \$25,000 and above each year.

Hats in the Garden celebrated 20 years in 2024 in a spectacular milestone luncheon chaired by fellow Sustaining Leadership Council member Barbie Hills. Thanks to her relentless efforts, the event drew 700-plus guests and raised more than \$4.5 million—a new record!

As my successor, Cathy Funderburg, takes the helm, I know the Garden's future is bright. So many of you believed in this place when it wasn't more than a sketch and a dream. We are eternally grateful for your commitment and for the friends you have introduced along the way. I look forward to seeing you in the Garden.

Kathleen Kapnick
Chair, Board of Directors





Our New Horticultural Home

The 2024 opening of the **Evenstad Horticulture Campus**, our 60,000-square-foot, state-of-the-art growing operation, marked the beginning of a new era.

Our team spent much of the year learning its intricacies—how to adjust light, moisture, and humidity, for example—and identifying micro-climates within the greenhouses. After working in open-air nurseries under shade cloth, the technological shift has been immense!

Hurricanes Helene and Milton tested the campus's storm-worthiness. Our collections stayed safe and dry inside with hurricane-resistant siding and with generators ready to fire up in case the power went down.

Now, in 2025, we are ramping up production, growing plants to our horticultural standards, and expanding and refining our collections. This allows us to treat guests to even more head-turning tropical wonders and deepen our commitment to protecting rare and threatened plants.



Orchid Garden improvements

A resurfaced LaGrippe Orchid Garden floor makes it easier for guests to navigate this colorful space and examine its beautiful blooms up close.

An Evolving Landscape

Our staff is ever on the lookout for new plants and new opportunities to enhance the cultivated gardens. The Evenstad Horticulture Campus allows us to expand these efforts and grow plants to our exacting standards.

Enhanced displays

From our collections, we planted approximately **1,000** new plants in the Garden in 2024.

New species include:

Encephalartos woodii

This plant is a cycad, a type of cone-bearing specimen that dates back to prehistoric times. This *Encephalartos* is a clone of the last-known specimen of its kind, which has been dubbed “the loneliest plant in the world.”

Sabal lougheediana

Taxonomists recognized this species as a distinct kind of sabal palm less than a decade ago. The palm, which exists only on the Caribbean island of Bonaire, is extremely rare, with just 23 known specimens in the wild. Growing these trees in botanical gardens is one way to conserve them.

Ceiba hybrids

Thanks to a partnership with a hybridizer in Palm Beach, we also added 20 new *Ceiba*, or silk floss, hybrids to our collection. These trees have spiny trunks and delicate flowers, a juxtaposition that delights visitors.

In addition to the formal collections, we continually enhance our property with annual and seasonal plantings. Our team sowed **25,000 ornamental and vegetable seeds** in 2024!



In 2024, we added approximately **1,670** plants, representing **460** types, and **281,720** seeds, cuttings, and fruits.

Expanding collections

Our collections grow each year, thanks to our networking with plant collectors, relationships with fellow botanical gardens, and our own collecting trips. In 2024, we added approximately **1,670** plants, representing **460** types, and **281,720** seeds, cuttings, and fruits. More than **14,200** of those seeds, cuttings, and fruits were wild-collected by our conservationists. **Seventy-four** of the newly acquired plants are classified as endangered.

Introducing the Collector's Circle

A new philanthropic opportunity gives donors a chance to grow and shape some of the Garden's most cherished collections: waterlilies, ornamental plants, flowering trees, and orchids. Donor **Christine Williamson** (at center, in white) initiated and funded the first Collector's Circle project, a new display in the Kapnick Brazilian Garden featuring our growing begonia collection. Fort Worth Botanic Garden is sharing its nationally certified collection with us; Christine's gift allowed us to share it with our audiences.



Building Back Ecosystems

Collier County began its long-awaited **beach dune restoration project** in late 2024, using a playbook the Garden developed. After years of research and observation, the Garden recommended county leaders use a diverse mix of species grown from local genetics, which are adapted to Southwest Florida's temperature range, rainfall, and other climatic conditions. More typically, dune restoration projects rely on one to two species and little attention is paid to their origins.



The Garden's recommended plant palette was limited in the commercial market. In response, our staff began amassing seeds and cuttings starting in 2023 and partnered with Naples-based commercial grower American Farms to ramp up production. EarthBalance, a large restoration firm charged with the shoreline replanting, will incorporate these plants into the project along with its stock of shoreline species.

Garden educators, meanwhile, launched a new **beach dune education series** designed to help residents and visitors understand the workings of dune ecosystems, how they lessen wind and water damage to coastal communities, and how beachgoers, in turn, can protect them. The educators led **215** people on **19** tours along Naples and Marco Island beaches. A **Collier Community Foundation** grant supported these endeavors.



Bulking up native seeds

A national shortage of native plant seeds has made it tough to rebuild beach dunes—or any other ecosystem—following hurricanes, fires, floods, freezes, and other natural disasters. Garden conservationists are serving on a nationwide committee examining the reasons for the shortfall and seeking ways to overcome barriers.

Big-picture solutions may be years down the road, but the Garden has delved into meeting Southwest Florida's immediate and future needs. In addition to the beach dune partnerships, we started a **restoration seed bank** to conserve the species that underpin the region's habitats. In less than a year, we amassed more than **437,000 seeds!**



Managing our Preserve

Our Preserve is a restored ecosystem, and we manage it to maintain distinct Southwest Florida habitats, giving our guests a taste of the wild without venturing off our property. The Preserve is a place where native plants—both common and rare varieties—thrive and where wildlife, including state-threatened gopher tortoises, take up residence.

In 2024, we:

- Observed a flowering Tampa prairie clover (*Dalea adenopoda*), an imperiled plant found only in peninsular Florida.
- Spotted *Tillandsia pruinosa*, the fuzzywuzzy airplant, considered to be “critically imperiled” in South Florida. Our team was delighted to see it in flower.
- Continued our prescribed fire regimen, burning 8.8 acres, about 10% of the Preserve. These fires are critical to ecosystem health, and they help ensure the safety of our neighborhood because they consume dead leaves, pine needles, and other debris that could fuel wildfire.

A Garden of Science

Research is integral to Naples Botanical Garden. Our staff seeks to better understand the natural world through on-site projects and regional collaborations. We participate in numerous local, state, national, and global initiatives and offer our Preserve to fellow researchers to advance knowledge of native plants, wildlife, and ecosystems.



Orchid surveys

Director of Collections **Nick Ewy**, along with fellow Garden staff, is part of a network of plant experts surveying Southwest Florida's vast conservation lands to glean insight into the prevalence, health, reproduction, and survival of the state's endangered and threatened native orchids. The surveyors recorded hundreds of native orchids, many of them rare, at each site, which included the Fakahatchee Strand Preserve State Park, Collier-Seminole State Park, Audubon's Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary, and the Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge.

Beach dune research

If you sprinkle seeds or tiny cuttings of coastal plants on a beach, will they sprout? Garden experts are investigating alternatives to planting nursery-grown seedlings along beach dunes. Meanwhile, we're supporting research by **Florida Gulf Coast University** into other dune-related questions, such as: What is the ideal planting depth for coastal seedlings? What are their water and nutrient needs? Can dune plants grow under light-penetrating boardwalks, reducing the loss of sand along access points?



Costa Rican trees

Osa Conservation, a Costa Rican conservation organization, sent the Garden hundreds of native tree seeds to start a backup collection and study long-term protocols for storage and growth. The group has embarked on a first-of-its-kind effort to restore agricultural land and create a contiguous corridor. Its hope is that plants, insects, birds, and other wildlife can adapt to climate change by migrating from the low-lying, warming Osa Peninsula to cooler, higher regions.



Graduate research

Florida Gulf Coast University graduate student **Emily Hosea** completed research into the use of native grasses along canals, finding that native species outperformed and required less maintenance than typically used bahiagrass (*Paspalum notatum*). Vice President of Conservation **Chad Washburn** served on her graduate advisory committee, and Garden staff assisted with planting the test canal.





Studies in the Preserve

Florida SouthWestern State College Biology Professor **Jordan Donini** uses the Garden's Preserve as a research site.

In 2024, he and his students:

- Monitored a population of native mud turtles released in the Garden in 2022 after being rescued from the illegal wildlife trade.
- Examined fecal samples for the presence of snake lungworm, a parasite spreading through the snake population believed to have been introduced to Florida through non-native Burmese pythons.
- Started research into two aquatic salamanders, the two-toed amphiuma and greater siren. The researchers seek to learn more about the population of these cryptic amphibians, as well as their diet and potential pathogens.



Journal article

Vice President of Conservation **Chad Washburn** examined the role that institutions such as botanical gardens and zoos can play in sustainable water resource management in “Conservation of Water Resources in a Botanic Garden,” a paper published in the April 2024 issue of the *Journal of Zoological and Botanical Sciences*.

Crop wild relatives

Crop wild relatives are wild-growing “cousins” of cultivated grains, fruits, vegetables, legumes, and nuts. Scientists are investigating how to breed their advantageous traits, such as drought resistance and heat tolerance, into crops to strengthen the world’s food supply.

Netted pawpaw

We have a collection of netted pawpaw (*Asimina reticulata*), related to the tropical-tasting, temperate fruit that is starting to garner attention in farmers markets and culinary circles. In the past, we hand pollinated our plants to get fruit. But prescribed burns in the Preserve seem to have attracted the plant’s pollinator, and in 2024 we tallied **300 netted pawpaw** and collected **80 fruits**, yielding 356 seeds. In addition, we have **150 netted pawpaw** growing in the nursery.

Mangifera

Mangifera is a genus that includes the edible mangos we know and love, and many other species that have potential as crop wild relatives. We added **three new species** to the Lea Asian Garden, bringing the total number of *Mangifera* species in our collection to seven. At researchers’ request, we sent tissue samples to Chicago Botanic Garden for genomic sequencing. One species, *M. casturi*, is extinct in the wild and two others, *M. laljiwa* and *M. zeylanica*, are considered vulnerable.



Anyone can be a scientist!

Citizen science projects allow anyone with curiosity and a love of the outdoors to collect data that scientists use in their studies.

Frog Watch

In 2024, the Garden was among the Bayshore District sites where frog lovers spent summer evenings tallying the native frogs they spotted and heard. Participants detected **eight** species in all; they heard **five** at the Garden.

Birding

Birding enthusiasts at the Garden fed **490+ checklists** into Cornell University's eBird database, one of the world's largest biodiversity-related science projects with more than 100 million bird sightings a year.

In addition to those who bird on their own, the Garden offers weekly guided birding outings. See their contributions at right.



Birding Group SNAPSHOT

18

Average number of people participating in weekly Tuesday morning birding sessions

50

Highest number of birders on a single day (March 5)

2,000

Number of person-hours birding in the Preserve

50+

Newcomers introduced to birding

140+

Species recorded in 2024

58

Highest number of species tallied on a single day (February 27)

Growing the Next Generation

The Garden is committed to helping the next generation learn to love plants and nature as much as we do!

D.R.A.G.O.N. Squad

Twenty intrepid middle schoolers from the Immokalee Community Academy venture on botanical-focused adventures with Garden staff to learn more about the natural world and how to protect it. This is the second full year for these Dragons (Dedicated Researchers Adventuring for Greener Outdoors Now). The program started out as a yearlong climate change education pilot project with the United States Botanic Garden. Immokalee students and Garden educators agreed to keep the program going, and a grant from the **National Recreation Foundation** helped expand it.

In 2024, this group:

- Traveled **1,153 miles** on field trips.
- Completed **107 unique activities** in **49 lesson plans**—all written by Garden staff.
- Grew and installed roughly **150 plants** at the Immokalee Pioneer Museum.
- Connected students with staff and volunteers from **11 local community organizations**.

Field trips

Whether we inspire the next botanists, ecologists, or horticulturists—or simply pique kids' curiosity about nature—field trips are integral to the Garden's education efforts. We welcomed almost **4,000 students** on **101 field trips** in 2024. Our Budding Botanists—Collier County fourth graders—



dissected **1,140 flowers** and the same number of seed carriers (pods, shells, and other casings containing seeds) as part of their experience.

Let's Grow!

Our team shares its love of gardening with schools and community groups that want to produce their own fresh foods through this signature program.

In 2024, we:

- Instructed **112 people** in three gardening workshops.
- Loaned **198 EarthBoxes** for container gardening.
- Grew and distributed almost **4,500 seedlings**—among them basil, cucumber, kale, okra, peppers, spinach, and tomatoes.



Garden interns

Four trainees spent the summer with us. Two never left! **Emily Rodriguez** and **Gillian Stocking** studied at Florida Gulf Coast University and are now an integral part of the Conservation and Education teams, respectively.



Exploring Nature's Wonders

The Garden's educators continually find new ways to engage and delight visitors.

In 2024, they:

- Gave **1,150 daily tours** to nearly **9,720 people**. That's **863 hours'** worth of tours—or nearly 36 days straight!
- Delivered Dig Deeper programs to approximately **5,270 people**. Geared to adult attendees, this daily program features lessons spanning 30 different themes, all developed by our staff and related to our mission and botanical collections.
- Shared nature's secrets with some **3,400 children** and their adult companions through the W.O.N.D.E.R. (Walk, Observe, Navigate, Draw, Explore, Read) program.
- Took W.O.N.D.E.R. indoors for the first time during the hot summer months—to the relief of all! Almost **1,400 people** visited our indoor learning space, set with nature-inspired play areas, kid-sized furniture, and reading nooks.
- Distributed more than **15,000 W.O.N.D.E.R. packets**, written and illustrated by our staff, for families to use in the Garden—or in their own backyards.
- Rolled out Garden grounds cart tours. For a modest additional fee, guests hopped aboard golf carts and experienced portions of the Garden, such as the Preserve, that they might not traverse on foot. Our educators gave **126 tours** and drove 189 miles over five months, about 1.5 miles per tour.

Did you know?

Our Garden educators either hold or are working toward certification as interpretive guides through the National Association for Interpretation. Director of Education & Interpretation **Mary Helen Reuter** is a trainer for that organization.



A Blooming Event Scene

The Garden's events are plant-inspired and people-fueled! We love the Garden every day, but festivals and events make it extra special.

Plein Air Fest

Nearly a **dozen** members of the **Naples Art District** delighted guests in January by taking their easels and canvases into the Garden and letting nature inspire their brushstrokes.

Flower shows galore

Thousands of people flocked to the Garden in February and March for our annual favorites—the **Naples Orchid Society Annual Show & Sale**, the **Annual Ikebana Exhibition**, and the **Naples Flower Show & Garden Market**. One highlight: In

the center of the Naples Flower Show, Director of Collections **Nick Ewy** set up a towering mahogany tree that had died and was removed from the Garden. He festooned it with orchids and epiphytes, a display that echoed the exhibit he and **Liz Chehayl**, the Brian Holley Curator of Collections, helped design at the Chelsea Flower Show in London (see page 22).

Family Wonder Days

Almost **1,500 people** visited the Garden during this annual celebration of nature, family, and memory making. A favorite stop was an obstacle course in the Kapnick Caribbean Garden where participants “bobbed through hula hoops like coconuts” and “wove around poles like vines.”

Tasting the Tropics

Guests treated this annual affair like a treasure hunt. In addition to sampling an array of fruits in Kapnick Hall, they took some **250 tropical fruit maps** and traversed the Garden, looking to find the trees that produce those all-natural treats.

Día de los Muertos

Now in its third year, the Garden's Día de los Muertos Celebration is becoming a community holiday tradition with more than **2,700 guests** in attendance. Upward of **975 memories** were shared on a Memory Wall. **Five community groups**—Guadalupe Center, Boys & Girls Club – Collier, Habitat for Humanity – Collier, Coalition of Immokalee Workers, and Pace Center at



Immokalee—set up elaborate ofrendas, or altars, commemorating loved ones.

We love waterlilies!

Waterlilies are among the Garden's biggest and showiest collections, and we love sharing them!

Waterlily Weekend brought in **1,150 guests** in September for tours, talks, and—for the first time—tastes. Educators handed out **240 cups** filled with **air-popped waterlily seeds**, similar in texture and flavor to popcorn.

Photographers delighted in our waterlily collection with **100** of them capturing spectacular images for our Waterlily Weekend photography contest. Congratulations to **Carol Heffernan**, who won the

color and black-and-white categories, and **Jay Simpson** for taking top prize in the “manipulated” category.

How much weight can a waterlily hold? **135 pounds**—at least in the case of a *Victoria* ‘Longwood hybrid’ in our collections. Along with 11 other botanical gardens, we participated in a waterlily weigh-in that tested the strength of this *Victoria*, a cross between two species of giant waterlilies. Our aquatic gardeners gently placed 15-pound sandbags on its pad until the plant had reached its max. We didn't win the contest—but we sure did conquer social media with **41,000 likes** on TikTok!

The world's best waterlily hybridizers donated **10 new creations** to the Garden's ever-growing

collection through the International Waterlily & Water Gardening Society's **New Waterlily Competition**. We hosted two categories, miniature and tropical day blooming waterlilies. Our staff's aquatic gardeners grew and documented each entry's growth, vigor, color, and other attributes to submit to judges.

Arts & Culture

The opening exhibition of 2024 had our guests soaring with childhood delight; its closing one offered a chance for quiet serenity.

Musical Swings

As the name implies, this installation from Canada's Daily tous les jours featured swings that played music as guests pumped their legs. Each swing emitted musical notes from one of four instruments; the higher the swing, the higher the note. In all, there were **16,590 rides** recorded with an average ride time of **2.25 minutes**. We happily noticed the retirees were as gleeful as the toddlers.



Patterns of Change

The Batik Guild, an international assembly of textile artists, partnered with the Garden to organize its first exhibition outside the United Kingdom. **Twenty-five artists from 11 countries** exhibited works depicting a changing world and their responses to it. The exhibition resonated with Garden guests; nearly **400 people** attended the opening reception alone.



Internalizing the External: New Perspectives on Nature by Ran Adler

Naples-based assemblage artist Ran Adler amassed plants and plant matter—seeds, thorns, reeds, branches and pods—from **10 species** and transformed them into meditative works of art. His use of light and shadow, the earthy fragrance of his materials, and the gentle ambient music evoked “a sense of peace and introspection,” in the words of one viewer, and left another “full of soul.”

Endlessly Wild: New Works by Sara Abalan

Formerly based in New York, painter Sara Abalan discovered the allure of the tropics upon moving to Naples and now captures its flora in bold, abstract designs that she considers “collages of memories.”

Nature Journaling Invitational

Can eight weeks make an artist? Yes! **Sixteen alumni** from the Garden's **Nature Journaling Creative Aging Program** exhibited their best works, sketched during an eight-week crash course on visual art fundamentals and botanical illustration. The online instruction, offered in English and Spanish in 2024, drew an international crowd. Exhibiting artists hailed from **five countries**—the United States, Colombia, Cuba, Mexico, and Venezuela.





Cultivating Community

The Garden serves as an important gathering spot. In 2024, we enhanced existing offerings and introduced new ones to inspire companionship and community.

Buoyed by the success of our 2023 “Frida After 5” series during the *Frida and Her Garden* exhibition, we introduced **Friday After 5** on select Fridays between February and May, with music, cocktails, activities—and opportunities to simply unwind. Some **1,060** people joined us.

The increasingly popular **Sunset Wednesdays** continued with more activities, special tours, and people—**2,200** of them—than ever!

In appreciation of our Members, we introduced **Member Coffee Breaks** in 2024, handing out free coffee and pastries on select Fridays and encouraging conversation with our staff and each other.

We love seeing families choose the Garden to celebrate special days. We welcomed more than **600 moms and grandmas** for Mother’s Day.

Giving Back

Ever appreciative of community support, the Garden seeks ways to enhance our region and make our 170-acre campus accessible to Southwest Floridians.

Garden for All

We marked the fifth anniversary of Garden for All, our community access program. It is composed of two distinct initiatives: a membership program for working families who are connected to nonprofit partners such as Grace Place and whose



incomes don’t allow for cultural experiences; and complimentary admission for the region’s essential workers, such as teachers, law enforcement officers, and health care employees.

- Nearly **600 families** are part of the membership program.
- About **2,700 essential workers** qualify for complimentary access.
- All told, we’ve given away some **29,000 Garden visits** over five years!

Free & discounted admission

We grant free admission to all guests on select days during the year, including July 4, Haitian Flag Day, Juneteenth, and to library cardholders from Collier, Lee, and Charlotte counties during Library Cardholder Week. About **4,500 people** visited on these days, the equivalent of more than **\$100,000** in adult admission fees. We also offer **summer resident discounts** to Collier, Lee, and Charlotte residents.

Thank you, service members

To honor those who have served our country, we offer active and retired military members free admission on Memorial Day, and we participate in Blue Star Museums. This national program gives active-duty service members and their families free admission between Armed Services Day in

May and Labor Day in September. More than **100 service members** and families visited through this program.

Community contributions

Whether giving plants to nonprofit and civic groups or offering expertise, the Garden is always looking to use our resources to help local community and fellow botanical organizations.

- We partnered with the **Bayshore Gateway Triangle Community Redevelopment Agency** to replant a median that had been stricken with a palm disease. We’re also consulting with that organization to create a new park connecting the Bayshore District with Sugden Regional Park. More on that to come in 2025!
- Our friends in Sarasota suffered a tremendous blow in Hurricane Milton. A Garden crew assisted **Marie Selby Botanical Gardens** in clearing its property and tending damaged plants, uprighting at least **15 mature trees** and hauling some **20 truckloads** of debris, among other tasks.
- We also helped the young **Peace River Botanical & Sculpture Garden** continue its development with a gift of 38 *Plumeria* cultivars, and an assortment of flowering trees, fruiting trees, shrubs, and a waterlily.
- We hosted the **Paws for Peace** event on behalf of the Shelter for Abused Women and the Humane Society Naples. The Shelter welcomes the pets of women fleeing abusive relationships, better enabling them to leave and seek help. This was our fifth year collaborating with the Shelter during Domestic Violence Awareness Month.



- Our fire-certified land managers routinely help partnering organizations conduct prescribed fires on their properties. In 2024, our team assisted with **three off-site prescribed burns**, totaling nearly **2,000 acres**, through the South Florida Prescribed Fire Working Group collaboration.
- We hosted the **Florida Nursery, Growers and Landscape Association** conference, bringing together horticultural professionals from across the state.
- Vice President of Horticulture **Brian Galligan**, along with plant experts from the Atlanta Botanical Garden and Chicago Botanic Garden, participated in a peer review study of the Fort Worth Botanic Garden's horticulture and operations efficiencies.

Programs for people with additional needs

We offer unique educational programs designed to meet the needs of families who have a loved one with sensory sensitivities and with Alzheimer's and related dementias.

- Almost **300 people** attended five **Sensory-Friendly Saturday** programs during

which they enjoyed family activities in areas of the Garden set up to minimize distractions and noise.

- **Meet Me in the Garden**, created in tandem with the **Alzheimer's Support Network**, offers botanically inspired activities for people with dementia and their care partners. In 2024, **145 people** attended the sessions. The Garden also hosted some **520 attendees** of the **Elephant Fest** to raise money for the Alzheimer's Support Network, which offers support, education, and other resources to families impacted by dementia.

Many Hands, Light Work

Our volunteer program is one way the Garden fulfills its mission of connecting plants and people. Among many contributions, our volunteers help special events run smoothly and ensure guests see the Garden at its most beautiful!

Individual volunteers contributed nearly **8,250 hours** to weekly assignments, special event coverage, and through Naples Garden Club member projects. They help with everything from administrative tasks to pulling weeds.

Increasingly, we're welcoming **volunteer groups** to accomplish big tasks in short periods of time. In 2024, **221 community volunteers** from **11 local organizations** contributed **8,850 hours**. In one especially productive undertaking, **53 Publix employees** mulched the entire Evenstad Horticulture Campus over a single morning!

We're seeing such great returns on these group efforts that Volunteer Services Manager **Karen Pattison** documented the Garden's successes for the October 2024 edition of *Roots: Botanic Gardens Conservation International Educational Review*.

Did you know?

We offer community groups and fellow nonprofit organizations in-kind gifts of membership and admission passes for their raffles and other fundraisers. In 2024, we gave away roughly **\$21,000** worth of *Family & Friends* memberships and almost **\$8,500** worth of passes.



International Influence

The Garden contributes to plant conservation, environmental education, and horticulture projects well beyond Southwest Florida.

Caribbean and Central American Network

The Garden serves as the Secretariat, or coordinator, of the Caribbean and Central American Network under Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI).

Major undertakings in 2024 included:

- A conservation horticulture workshop in Guatemala City, drawing **34 participants** from **nine countries** and **22 institutions**. These participants will go back to their home institutions and countries, multiplying conservation efforts by teaching their colleagues what they learned. This workshop and others help botanical garden professionals work toward achieving the Plant Conservation Strategy for

the Caribbean Region, addressing everything from protecting threatened plants to educating about the importance of plant diversity.

- Three online “Tech Talks,” offering tips on topics such as developing nature-based solutions and applying for grants. A total of **115 people** participated.
- A visiting professional program at Naples Botanical Garden, through which **eight botanical garden specialists** from **six countries** exchanged knowledge and ideas with our staff.
- The 2024 Botanical Bridges Congress, a gathering held every two years to discuss major regional conservation undertakings, needs, and practices. Held in Colombia, the 2024 assembly drew more than **130 participants** representing **49 institutions** and **23 countries**. That’s double the attendance and representation of the 2022 session.

Immersive studies



Lina Ramirez, the Regional Conservation Initiatives Coordinator, participated in a monthlong Field Course for Applied Tropical Tree Conservation in Costa Rica examining the conservation and restoration of trees. Classes included field techniques, tree climbing, managing herbarium collections, and assessing tree species using the International Union for Conservation of Nature’s Red List protocols. **Dan Agis**, the Garden’s Conservation Horticulture Manager, delivered

a lecture titled, “Strategies for Tropical Tree Conservation: The Role of Ex-Situ Collections.”

Rodrigues Island tree relocation

Garden experts returned to Rodrigues Island, off the coast of Madagascar, in 2024 to see a tree rescue to completion. In 2023, Vice President of Horticulture **Brian Galligan** had traveled to the remote place to prepare five endangered trees for relocation, saving them from an airport runway expansion project (see photo, page 23). He returned in May 2024 with **Stephen Jurek**, Assistant Director of Landscape Maintenance, to complete their move to a nearby nature reserve. The trees are doing well in their new home!

Chelsea Flower Show

For the second year, Naples Botanical Garden horticulturists showcased Florida’s rare native orchids at the world-renowned Chelsea Flower Show. In 2024, the native orchids came from our collections, thanks to the work of our staff in securing a **Certificate of Scientific Exchange**, or COSE, a special designation allowing us to import and export endangered plants. That certificate is also helping us expand our collections and share plants with other COSE-certified institutions.



Did you know?

Our staff contributes to conferences and professional gatherings at home and abroad. Among our 2024 appearances were:

- **Global Botanic Garden Congress, Singapore**
- **Society for Ecological Restoration North American Conference, Vancouver, Canada**
- **American Public Gardens Association Annual Conference, Boston, Mass.**
- **Minnesota Alliance for Volunteer Advancement Annual Conference, Minneapolis, Minn.**
- **Southeastern Partners for Plant Conservation, Atlanta, Ga.**
- **National Association of Interpretation Regional Conference, Birmingham, Ala.**
- **Asociación Mexicana de Jardines Botánicos (Association of Mexican Botanical Gardens), San Sebastián del Oeste, Oeste, Mexico**
- **Orchid societies** throughout South Florida

We hold leadership and advisory positions in regional, state, national, and international organizations.

They include:

- **Botanic Gardens Conservation International**
- **American Public Gardens Association**
- **American Alliance of Museums**
- **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers**
- **Latin American Botanical Society**
- **National Restoration Seed Bank Association**







Hats in the Garden

Cheers to 20 years! *Hats in the Garden*, our signature fundraiser, celebrated two decades of fashion, florals, fine food, and, yes, magnificent millinery with its 2024 luncheon, *Runways*. Organized by the **Sustaining Leadership Council** and chaired by **Barbie Hills**, the event drew more than **700 guests** and raised over **\$4.5 million**. That included \$2.5 million for the Fund-a-Need, “Ready the Runways,” a long-term plan to prepare the Preserve for enhancements, such as wider pathways and tram tours. We aspire to introduce more people to the wonders of Southwest Florida’s native ecosystems, and we’re grateful to the SLC and *Hats* attendees for helping launch this endeavor!

The Garden also said a sad farewell to *Hats* founder **Jane Purdy Berger**, whom we lost in March 2024, just days after the luncheon she was so proud to have helped establish.



Saving Plants by Having Fun

Johnsonville Night Lights in the Garden

Our annual celebration of winter in the tropics dazzled visitors once again in 2024, drawing in thousands of people for memories and merriment. Ticket sales for these magical nights work wonders for the Garden, generating almost 10% of our annual operating budget and allowing us to deepen our commitment to plant conservation, horticultural excellence, and environmental education.



Hats photos by Zee Anna Photography for Gulfshore Life

Did you know?

Hats in the Garden generates about a quarter of the Garden’s operating budget and is an integral part of supporting our mission.

Thank You to our Leaders!

Plants and people thrive at Naples Botanical Garden. That's because the organization is nourished by the generosity, support, expertise, and guidance of the Board of Directors and Sustaining Leadership Council. These individuals are the backbone of the organization, working to continually enhance the Garden. As you cheer the successes outlined in this annual report, be certain to applaud the supporters who made them happen.

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Garden Visionaries

Our highest level of recognition, Garden Visionaries, honors those who have forged the Garden into what it is today. Because of these individuals, we can embrace our role as a world-class showcase for tropical horticulture, as a cornerstone of regional plant conservation, and as a place where plants and people thrive together.

These generous Garden patrons offered gift commitments between January 1, 2024 and December 31, 2024.

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Generosity Makes Gardens Grow

Like plants in need of regular watering, our Garden depends on ongoing financial support to carry out its mission. Memberships, gifts to the annual fund, grants, sponsorships, and other contributions ensure we serve as a regional leader in plant conservation, environmental education, and horticultural excellence. Thank you to our Royal Palm Society Members, whose annual contributions of \$1,500 or more in 2024 continue to enhance our efforts for years to come.

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