



New England
Botanic Garden
AT TOWER HILL

Press Kit

Mission

To create experiences with plants that inspire people and improve the world.

History

New England Botanic Garden at Tower Hill opened in Boylston, MA, in 1986, but the organization's history dates back much further. The Garden is owned and operated by the Worcester County Horticultural Society (WCHS), one of the oldest active horticultural societies in the country. Established in 1842, WCHS grew to be a cornerstone institution for the region. For decades, from its downtown Worcester headquarters, the society held exhibitions that celebrated Worcester County's thriving agricultural community. By the 1940s, however, the large country estates that supported such shows began to diminish and exhibition entries declined. In response, WCHS set out to cultivate its own gardens. A vision of a permanent botanic garden for the public to enjoy grew.

About the Garden

Discover a world-class garden in the heart of New England. At this living museum, visitors experience the wonder of plants while exploring formal and naturalistic garden spaces, conservatories, walking trails, and more. New England Botanic Garden features shopping and dining opportunities, accessible pathways, and expansive views of the Wachusett Reservoir. The Garden is proud to be a place where everyone belongs, where wandering is always welcome, and where no two visits will ever be the same.

Garden Highlights



The Ramble

A whimsical garden designed for families with interactive play features and hundreds of perennials, shrubs, trees, and a pond of seasonal aquatic plants.



The Court: A Garden Within Reach

A universally accessible garden featuring raised beds, living walls, and plants selected for their multisensory appeal.



Inner Park

A woodland native plant garden that spans more than five acres and features a variety of spring ephemerals and native shrubs.



Vegetable Garden

A garden space featuring sustainably grown heirloom vegetables, fruits, and herbs designed to inspire the home gardener.



Lawn Garden

A large-scale garden with an array of exquisite trees and shrubs, as well as thousands of spring bulbs and summer-blooming perennials.



Orangerie & Limonaia

Subtropical conservatories that house collections of non-hardy plants such as citrus, palms, agave, camellias, orchids, and more.

By The Numbers 2023



Total area
200 acres

Annual Visitors
200,000+



Members
12,000+



Volunteers
275+



Staff
65

Adult Education
Participants
4,929



Youth Education
Participants
10,414



Unique
Garden Spaces
18



CO2 Emissions
Eliminated
50 tons
(through sustainable
horticulture initiatives)

Garden in Action

New England Botanic Garden is determined to do and be more for the region. Recent years have been marked with many important milestones.

2017

Growing Boldly, \$28M capital campaign launched to support projects that make the Garden more accessible and resilient.

Acquisition of the Lucia Property expands the Garden's footprint by seven acres.

2018

New England Botanic Garden is re-accredited by the American Alliance of Museums.

Acquisition of the Kim Property expands the Garden's footprint by 26 acres.

2019

Restoration of the Frank L. Harrington Sr. Orchard begins, preserving a historic collection of 119 heirloom apple varieties from a plant disease called fire blight.

2021

Universally designed entry way and expanded parking lot construction are completed as part of Growing Boldly.

2022

The Ramble, a garden space designed for the young and young at heart, opens to the public.

The Garden announces its name change from "Tower Hill Botanic Garden" to "New England Botanic Garden at Tower Hill."

The Garden becomes the first botanic garden in the nation to be certified a Green Zone by the American Green Zone Alliance for efforts to decarbonize.

2023

The Climate Garden, a hands-on youth-oriented garden focused on sustainable agriculture, opens to the public.

New England Botanic Garden is voted "Top Botanic Garden in the U.S." by TravelAwaits.

Acquisition of the Joslin Lot expands the Garden's footprint by 14 acres.

Sustainability

Public gardens play a vital role in the health and happiness of our collective world. New England Botanic Garden implements sustainable initiatives to help maintain healthy habitats in our private and public spaces, so people, plants, and wildlife thrive on this planet for generations to come.

Some of the Garden's sustainability initiatives include:

- Using ecological approaches to land management
- Adopting electric landscaping equipment
- Incorporating native plants
- Building healthy soils
- Limiting plastic use in the café and Garden Shop
- Educating the community about sustainable gardening practices and plant-based solutions to climate change





Community Outreach

In collaboration with nonprofit and municipal partners, as well as local residents and volunteers, the Garden advances climate-related urban greening initiatives that address issues of environmental justice and create opportunities for people to connect with nature and learn about the essential role plants play in our lives.

New England Botanic Garden's community outreach programs take shape in our gardens and in the community. Some examples include:

- Project Bloom
- Planters for People
- Greening the Gateway Cities Program
- Growing Green

Learn more at nebg.org/community-outreach.

Experiences

Educational Programs

Families, children, and adults find fun and engaging nature-based learning opportunities at New England Botanic Garden year-round. A robust calendar of activities includes visual arts classes, health and wellness workshops, lectures with horticulture experts, home gardening classes, kids arts and crafts, summer drop-off programs for children, and more.



Shopping & Dining

Located in the Visitors Center, the Garden Shop features seasonal houseplants, gardening tools, books for all ages, jewelry, stationary, nature-inspired toys for children, and more. Meanwhile, the Farmer and the Fork Café, open seven days a week for lunch, offers a variety of menu items prepared with fresh, locally sourced ingredients.





Exhibits & Events

Unique events and nature-inspired exhibitions celebrate the wonder of plants and showcase the art and science of horticulture. Some noteworthy featured exhibits and events include :

- Annual Orchid Exhibition
- Music in Bloom
- Thursday Summer Evenings
- Summer & Fall Exhibits
- Gnomevember
- Night Lights



Weddings & Private Events

Each year, over 300 private events, from weddings to children's birthday parties, celebrations of life, professional conferences, retreats, and more, are hosted across New England Botanic Garden grounds.

Engage Our Experts

New England Botanic Garden's experienced and knowledgeable leaders enjoy connecting with members of the media on topics of horticulture, landscape design, ecological approaches to gardening and land management, New England's native plants, urban forestry, the role of public gardens, and more.



Grace Elton, CEO

Grace Elton is CEO of New England Botanic Garden at Tower Hill, a 200-acre garden in Boylston, MA. Since 2017, she has increased the Garden's annual budget by 59%, annual visitation by 55%, and membership by 27%. She led the largest comprehensive capital campaign in the Garden's history, raising over \$31 M to build a children's garden, increasing infrastructure and ADA accessibility, increasing the Garden's physical footprint by over 60 acres, and growing the endowment. Elton has a strong public horticulture background with experience at premier gardens in the United States and United Kingdom. While serving as director of horticulture, Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden in Richmond, VA garnered national recognition as a top 10 botanical garden by USA Today and achieved the National Medal from the Institute of Museum and Library Services. She also served as horticulture supervisor and adjunct professor at the 118-acre Ambler Arboretum of Temple University in Ambler, Pennsylvania. As a recipient of the prestigious Martin McLaren Horticulture Scholar award presented by the Garden Club of America, Elton studied botanic garden education, practical horticulture and landscape design in England at the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, Royal Horticulture Society Rosemoor,

the Eden Project, and the Chelsea Physic Garden; and in Scotland at the Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh. Elton has a Master of Science in public horticulture with a certificate in museum studies from the Longwood Graduate Program, University of Delaware. Her Bachelor of Science degree is in environmental horticulture with a public gardens management specialization from University of Florida.

She serves as Treasurer of the Board of Directors for the American Public Gardens Association and Director at Large for Discover Central Massachusetts. Elton was honored as a "Top 40 Under 40" for Richmond, VA's Style Weekly magazine in 2013 and "Top 40 Under 40" for Worcester, MA's Worcester Business Journal in 2018. Elton was chosen for the 2019 Distinguished Young Alumni Award from the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources of the University of Delaware. She was also honored by the Worcester Business Journal on their "Power 50" list in both 2019 and 2023.



Mark Richardson, Director of Horticulture

Mark Richardson is Director of Horticulture for New England Botanic Garden at Tower Hill in Boylston, MA. He leads a team of horticulture staff and oversees a living plant collection that spans 16 distinct garden spaces, two conservatories, and over 100 acres of surrounding woodlands and wetlands. Since joining the organization in 2018, Richardson has ushered in projects that advance sustainability initiatives, preserve rare plant collections, protect open space, and more. Thanks to his leadership, New England Botanic Garden became the first botanic garden in the nation to earn Green Zone certification from the American Green Zone Alliance, a recognition of the Garden's transition to electric landscaping equipment. The organization also garnered national media attention when Richardson and his team launched a multi-year project to restore the Garden's historic heirloom apple orchard, a collection of over 250 trees threatened by fire blight.

Prior to joining the staff at New England Botanic Garden, Richardson served as Botanic Garden Director for Native Plant Trust, where he oversaw Garden in the Woods and Nasami Farm native plant nursery. He has a passion for ecological horticulture and native plants and frequently lectures on topics including "How to Kill Your Lawn." Richardson is co-author of the book *Native Plants for New England Gardens* (Globe Pequot, 2018). Richardson currently serves as president of the board of directors with the Ecological Landscape Alliance.





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