



**New England
Botanic Garden**
AT TOWER HILL

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Massachusetts botanic garden becomes leadership base for international and national environmental organizations

Plant conservation, research, and ecological horticulture guide new partnerships for New England Botanic Garden at Tower Hill

BOYLSTON, MA, July 29, 2024 – [New England Botanic Garden at Tower Hill](#) is pleased to announce a formal affiliation with leading international and national environmental organizations, the [U.S. branch of Botanic Gardens Conservation International](#) (BGCI-US) and the [Ecological Landscape Alliance](#) (ELA). This exciting new partnership, rooted in strong mission alignment, will bring the leadership base of both BGCI-US and ELA to the Boylston, Massachusetts botanic garden and will strengthen all three organizations in plant conservation, research, and ecological horticulture practice.

“The affiliation is a natural fit,” says Grace Elton, CEO of New England Botanic Garden at Tower Hill. The Garden operates on 200 acres and engages over 200,000 annual visitors in its mission to create experiences with plants that inspire people and improve the world. Partnering, Elton explains, creates opportunities for New England Botanic Garden to advance its strategic priorities, allowing the organization to better convene peer institutions and thought leaders in public horticulture around plant conservation and plant-based solutions to climate change. “We look forward to supporting the continued growth of BGCI-US and ELA through this partnership and to emerging as a leader on national and international platforms,” Elton says.

Both BGCI-US and ELA are nonprofit organizations that operate through membership models. BGCI-US engages around 160 botanic gardens in North America in efforts to secure plant diversity, conduct research, and advance the mission of its globally operating parent organization, Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI). Member gardens care for globally significant living plant collections, world class seed banks, and tissue culture infrastructure. Additionally, BGCI provides the botanic garden community with conservation tools, educational resources, and information to protect threatened plants across North America and around the world for the benefit of all.

While BGCI-US works internationally to increase the impact of conservation efforts by North American botanic gardens, ELA educates landscape professionals across the U.S. about the value of biological diversity. Its membership base of 1,300 individuals and organizations includes leading ecological horticulture experts who promote sustainable approaches to landscape design, construction, and

management. ELA regularly publishes resources and convenes practitioners from across the country around the most pressing topics in ecological horticulture.

By affiliating with New England Botanic Garden, BGCI-US and ELA gain practical support to expand their missions. They also gain much-desired executive leadership. As part of the partnership, New England Botanic Garden has agreed to host a full-time position for an executive director to lead both BGCI-US and ELA. Filling this new role is Mark Richardson, the Garden's most recent director of horticulture. Richardson, who joined New England Botanic Garden in 2018, is uniquely qualified to take up this position. During his tenure at New England Botanic Garden, he helped grow the organization's reputation for horticultural excellence, engaging in meaningful projects to preserve rare plant collections and earning national recognition for sustainability initiatives that decarbonize horticulture operations. Under his leadership, and that of CEO Grace Elton, New England Botanic Garden recently expanded its footprint through land acquisitions that protect habitat for diverse plant species. Before joining the team at New England Botanic Garden, Richardson served six years as botanic garden director at Native Plant Trust in Framingham, Massachusetts. He has also served on the board of directors for ELA since 2014.

"I'm thrilled to take on this new challenge in partnership with two organizations that share New England Botanic Garden's vision of a world where people and plants thrive," says Richardson. "The Ecological Landscape Alliance plays a critical role in educating industry professionals about innovations in ecological landscaping practices. BGCI-US provides its member gardens with vital resources in their efforts to save plants. Each complements the other and this partnership will further the strategic goals of all three organizations."

Partnerships like this one between New England Botanic Garden, BGCI-US, and ELA are not uncommon in public horticulture. Collaborations involving botanic gardens, research institutions, colleges and universities, or other mission-aligned nonprofit organizations allow botanic gardens to leverage the vast amount of knowledge and data stored in living plant collections and use it to help address the needs of the day, be they issues related to climate change adaptation and mitigation, urban forestry, food system sustainability, plant conservation, and more.

"This partnership represents an exciting opportunity for New England Botanic Garden as it broadens and deepens the impact of the Garden," says Kent Dur Russell, president of the board of trustees for the Worcester County Horticultural Society, New England Botanic Garden's parent organization. "We look forward to the many ways it will allow the Garden to fulfill its strategic goals and collaborate with BGCI-US and ELA on meaningful conservation and horticulture initiatives, amplifying the strengths of each organization."

For more information about New England Botanic Garden, its mission, history, and news visit nebg.org.

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Image caption:

Worcester County Horticultural Society Board President Kent dur Russell, New England Botanic Garden CEO Grace Elton, and Director of Strategic Horticulture Partnerships Mark Richardson stand under a magnolia tree in the Lawn Garden.

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About New England Botanic Garden at Tower Hill

New England Botanic Garden at Tower Hill is a nonprofit organization located at 11 French Drive in Boylston, Massachusetts. A regional destination, the Garden is operated on 200 acres by the Worcester County Horticultural Society, one of the oldest of its kind in the country, and is open to the public for garden viewing, trail walking, educational programs, private events, weddings, exhibitions, and more. In 2023, New England Botanic Garden was voted "Top Botanic Garden in the U.S." by *TravelAwaits*. New England Botanic Garden is an [AAM-accredited](#) museum that includes an irreplaceable collection of plants and creates opportunities for visitors to experience the wonder of plants, learn about the natural world, and make joyful connections. Learn all about New England Botanic Garden including its history, mission, and its staff at www.nebg.org.

About Botanic Gardens Conservation International

Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI) is the largest plant conservation network in the world, representing >900 member botanical institutions in more than 120 countries around the world. We are a charity which links the botanic gardens of the world in a global network for plant conservation.

We aim to support and empower our members and the wider conservation community, so that our knowledge and expertise can be applied to reversing the threat of extinction facing plants. Our vision is a world in which plant diversity is valued, secure and supports all life, and our mission is: To mobilise botanic gardens and engage partners in securing plant diversity for the wellbeing of people and the planet. We do this by saving plants; inspiring and leading people; sharing knowledge and resources, and; addressing global challenges through public engagement and education.

About Ecological Landscape Alliance

The Ecological Landscape Alliance educates, inspires, and empowers people to value biodiverse landscapes and employ ecological practices. Since its founding in 1992, ELA has promoted sustainable approaches to landscape design, construction, and management. ELA's commitment to innovative ideas and evidence-based practices has made the organization both a trusted resource and a vibrant community of landscape professionals and devoted gardeners.