

telegram.com | TELEGRAM & GAZETTE

---

## ENVIRONMENT

# New England Botanic Garden aims to be national plant conservation hub. What that means



**Veer Mudambi**

Worcester Telegram & Gazette

Published 4:56 a.m. ET Aug. 2, 2024 | Updated 4:56 a.m. ET Aug. 2, 2024

The New England Botanic Garden at Tower Hill is well known locally - for its stunning view, gorgeous plant collection and seasonal displays - but with recent partnerships, is aiming to become a bigger player in the national, and maybe international, botanic garden community.

On July 29, the garden announced a formal affiliation with two leading international and national environmental organizations, the U.S. branch of Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI-US) and the Ecological Landscape Alliance (ELA). The NEBG will provide a base of operations, with their own director of horticulture, Mark Richardson acting as part time executive director for both organizations.

"We hope to put ourselves on the map and get international recognition for our little garden in Central Mass," said NEBG CEO Grace Elton.

## What does this partnership mean for the New England Botanic Garden?

The centralized location and leadership will allow all three groups to better pursue their goals together while combining their specializations - BGCI's plant conservation, ELA's research, and NEBG's ecological horticulture.

Elton said the garden plans to play a bigger role in national plant conservation. BGCI provides the international botanic garden community with conservation tools, educational resources, and information to protect threatened plants across North America and around

the world. BGCI-US works with over 140 gardens across the country, and now NEBG will be part of that network.

ELA educates landscape professionals across the U.S. about the value of biological diversity and sustainability. Its membership includes leading ecological horticulture experts who work to apply these principles to landscape design, construction, and management. ELA regularly publishes resources and organizes meet-ups from across the country around the major topics in ecological horticulture. The NEBG will offer an accessible location for these events.

## **Will Mark Richardson be staying with the botanic garden?**

The executive director positions for both BGCI-US and ELA is part time, and Richardson will remain as the horticulture director at NEBG, a position he has held since 2018, while overseeing remote staff members for both organizations.

“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 in a press release from the NEBG. “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.”