



PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

New England Botanic Garden announces departure of CEO Grace Elton after nine years of visionary leadership

BOYLSTON, MA, September 21, 2026 – [New England Botanic Garden at Tower Hill](#) has announced that Grace Elton will be stepping down from the role of CEO after nine years leading the Boylston-based botanic garden on a journey of unprecedented growth. After making an indelible mark on New England Botanic Garden and the broader community, she will now take up a position as Executive Director of Sarah P. Duke Gardens at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina.

Elton's tenure at New England Botanic Garden began in 2017 and ushered in a period of transformative change. She is responsible for increasing the Garden's annual budget by 78 percent, annual visitation by 81 percent, and membership by 47 percent. She led the largest comprehensive capital campaign in the Garden's history, raising over \$31 million to build a garden for children and families, a beloved space known as The Ramble, and improve infrastructure and ADA accessibility. She also increased the Garden's physical footprint by over 60 acres, advancing its conservation impact, and grew the organization's endowment. Today's garden sits on nearly 200 acres, welcomes more than 250,000 visitors each year, and boasts national recognition for its gardens, its annual holiday light display, and its sustainability initiatives.

"Grace's leadership expanded the Garden's mission and its reach within the community and beyond. We are deeply grateful for her profound impact, her vision, and her dedication to the Garden. On behalf of the Board and the entire Garden community, I thank Grace for her contributions and lasting imprint on the organization and wish her continued success," said Gayle Weiss, President of the Board of Trustees.

Elton's legacy extends beyond the Garden itself and into the communities of greater Worcester. A champion of the region's arts and culture sector, she served on the boards of the Worcester Cultural Coalition, Discover Central Massachusetts, and the Worcester Economic Club. Dedicated to fostering "a garden for all," her leadership expanded programs and partnerships that improve access to nature and green spaces, welcome diverse communities, and provide education to people of all ages.

"It has been an incredible honor to serve as CEO of New England Botanic Garden at Tower Hill. I am very grateful to the board members, staff, members, volunteers, and the entire Garden community. I am especially proud of what we have accomplished together. We've fostered a garden that is a welcoming and inspiring place where people of all backgrounds can connect with plants and the natural world. While I am excited for my next chapter, the Garden will always hold a special place in my heart," said Elton.

Elton's last day at New England Botanic Garden will be December 4, 2026. The board has announced that an interim CEO will be hired before a national search for the organization's next leader takes place.

"Thanks to Grace's leadership, the Garden is stronger than ever. The board is excited to build off this momentum by expanding educational opportunities and growing our environmental stewardship. We remain committed to serving this region as a horticultural resource, community partner, and cultural hub for generations to come," said Weiss.

For more information or interviews, please contact Public Relations Manager Liz Nye at lnye@nebg.org or visit nebg.org/departure-announcement-of-ceo-grace-elton/.

Image Caption: New England Botanic Garden CEO Grace Elton in the Cottage Garden. Photo by Troy B. Thompson Photography.

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About New England Botanic Garden at Tower Hill

New England Botanic Garden at Tower Hill, [now celebrating its 40th anniversary](#), is a nonprofit organization located at 11 French Drive in Boylston, Massachusetts. A regional destination, the Garden is operated on nearly 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.

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