

Coming Soon: Construction of the Children's Garden



By: *Emily Goot*Executive Director

Photos By: Allison Fisher

The new Majeed Discovery Garden (MDG) will be a free and accessible children's garden, located inside the Florida Botanical Gardens— a public, Pinellas County park. The 2+ acres site is located along McKay Creek with 500 linear feet of frontage. It is also adjacent to 1+ acre of wetland and native plant buffer on the east and southern boundaries of the Garden and will include a pond area for additional exploration of aquatic ecosystems.

The creation of a children's garden within the Florida Botanical Gardens was originally included at the inception of the gardens in the late 1990s, however, was unable to be completed at the time of opening in 2000. In 2018, a Master Plan was undertaken by the Florida Botanical Gardens Foundation (FBGF), in collaboration with Pinellas County Parks and Conservation Resources (PCR), where the concept of the children's garden was revisited, and the current location was identified as an underutilized resource. With great enthusiasm at its meeting in October

2019, the FBGF Board voted to accept detailed design plans from Coyle & Caron Landscape Architects and pursue submission of the plans to PCR, the City of Largo, Southwest Florida Water Management District, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, and Pinellas County for approval.

The process has not been without its challenges, specifically with the rising escalation in construction costs post-pandemic. A capital campaign was launched in 2020, and since then many generous donors have come forward to contribute to this significant project. Not only will the MDG be a free, accessible garden, but it will also allow visitors and residents of Pinellas county to focus on the care and nurture of plants and animals as they interact in creative spaces designed to stimulate all five senses. There will be opportunities for hands-on and experiential learning in an outdoor setting, with a goal to entice, engage and educate children through discovery and play. To view more of the site details and features, visit www.flbqfoundation.org/ childrensgarden.

The FBGF hosted a Groundbreaking Ceremony on June 11, 2022, with a reception at the gardens and presentations at the proposed site. Among those in attendance was the Board of Directors of the



FBGF, Pinellas County Parks and Conservations Resources, members of the Board of County Commissioners, and Pinewood Cultural Park Partners (Heritage Village, Creative Pinellas). In addition to major donors to the MDG, members of the project team, local municipalities, Chambers of Commerce, and partner organizations.

Since construction began in July 2022, there have been significant changes to the MDG site, and we'd like to give you an update on the current construction progress. The MDG can be easily observed from the boardwalk that enters the Gardens from the Ulmerton Road parking lot. With each visit, guests will continue to see various structures sprout from the ground as the work of the construction team proceeds.

Excavation of the pond has been completed and awaits spring and summer rains to fill. The pond includes a wood deck for the observation overlook. Major efforts by volunteers of the Florida Botanical Gardens and the FBGF have been completed to remove invasive plants within the tree protection zones, which required many hours of pruning and pulling to clean the site of the invaders. Underground work has included the installation of drain lines, directional boring for wi-fi and potable water connections, as well as a sand filter for water quality enhancement along the berm that will form the pond. While a major portion of the site work has involved improvements of underground utilities, several features have begun to take shape above ground, including framing of the future Outdoor Classroom, which awaits exterior finishes.

Located on the northeast side of the site, the Outdoor Classroom will be a 600 sq. ft screened-in building, that will serve as a main feature of the MDG— a sort of hub for workshops, classes, field trips, and private events to be held in the garden. The Foundation shares its vision for the classroom with one of the major donors, the David Berolzheimer Foundation, and will bring an Educator on staff to run the ongoing programming. Adjacent to the classroom building is the 'Roots n



Rendered image of the Ti Gate Entrance to the Majeed Discovery Garden.

Shoots', another educational area that will include a potting shed, raised beds for planting, a Florida-Friendly Landscaping™ garden, and the RainKeep, a functional rainwater harvesting sculpture by artist Allison Newsome, that can hold up to 550 gallons of rainwater.

Construction proceeded with the excavation of the flood compensation/wetland mitigation area located

south of the boardwalk. As the final step, a large log sourced from Fort De Soto park, from a fallen Green Buttonwood Tree, was placed in the future wetland to enhance the habitat. This uniquely shaped log will provide a site for turtles and small alligators to bask in the sun, while the portions of the log that rise above the emergent wetland will certainly be a favorite perching location for birds.



Hydroseeding of the wetland mitigation area has also been performed, and the seeds have begun to germinate and turn the area green.

Site grading is underway throughout the MDG along with preparation for the new ADA-compliant concrete walkways. The grading includes a mound that will house a play feature; either the beetle climber or temporarily a site with giant foam building blocks from Imagination Playground. These 'Big Blue Blocks' sets are said to inspire creativity and engagement and allow for the

construction of tunnels, channels, or children's own inventions. The design and construction team also recently paid a visit to Creative Arts, in St. Petersburg, FL, where most of the MDG's play features and amenities are being fabricated, including the Pollinator Landing and Trunk Jump. The design team provided positive reports on the fabrication work, and expects to see these features and equipment begin to arrive for installation later this Spring.

Construction continues on the Outdoor Classroom, located behind the RainKeep 'Botanica'.



To learn more about the Majeed Discovery Garden, and how you can give back to the project, contact **Emily Goot** at emilty@flbgfoundation.org. Any inquiries or concerns about the construction process should be directed to **John Thomas**, Board President, at jethomassr@aol.com. We encourage you to come out and visit the site, as well as share updates and information on the MDG and the Florida Botanical Gardens Foundation. If you would like to continue to receive communications, join our email list at www.flbgfoundation.org/subscribe.

Second Annual Symposium a Success

By Margaret Gates, Event Chair

The Foundation's 2nd Annual Florida Native Plant Symposium was held Saturday, March 25th, 2023 on a bright and beautiful spring day!

Attendees, aspiring to not only cultivate native plants in their landscape, but also to improve their knowledge of our local ecosystems, were not disappointed.

Keynote speakers focused on the theme of the day: *Native plants - the heart of healthy ecosystems.* James Stevenson, UF/IFAS Education and Outreach Supervisor, explored Florida's unique local ecosystems educating on how to curate native plants in one's own landscape, while Dr. Jaret C. Daniels, Assistant Director and Curator of McGuire Center for Lepidoptera and Biodiversity at the Florida Museum of

Natural History in Gainesville, addressed the importance of pollinators, most particularly butterflies, to our native plants. Dr. Daniels visited our Butterfly Garden, and the butterflies, recognizing a friend, came out in swarms.

Four diverse breakout sessions, led by well-known experts, docent tours of native plants in the gardens, native plant sales and a picnic lunch completed our day of education, enthusiasm and enjoyment.

Native plants are indeed the heart of healthy ecosystems. In addition to insects and bugs, other wildlife depends on healthy ecosystems. Maybe we will explore this subject in our Third Annual Native Plant Symposium in 2024?

See you there!



Attendees of The Foundation's
2nd Annual Florida Native Plant
Symposium were not only aspiring
to cultivate native plants in their
landscape, but also improving their
knowledge of our local ecosystems.



Members of the Suncoast Sierra Club set up along our Eco Alley.



Local vendor, Jordan Parker, of JP Charisma shows off plants for sale at the Symposium.

Janet Kotash, volunteer docent, leads a group on a tour through the Native Plant Garden.





Two presenters, James Stevenson and Ray Wunderlich, enjoy lunch in the gardens during the Symposium.

Photos By: Master Gardener, Amy George

In Case You Missed it Additional events held in Quarters 1 & 2



The Clerk of the Circuit Court held its **annual Valentine's Day Wedding** in the gardens, with over 50 couples getting married or renewing their vows.

The **FWCOS** Orchid Repotting Clinic in March saw another successful year, with over 60 attendees and even more orchids serviced.

Kali Rabaut, of Blue House Florals, led a locally grown, **zero waste Floral Design Workshop** at the gardens in April.

The Central Pinellas Chamber of Commerce had their April Coffee n' Networking event on-site, complete with hard hat tours of the children's garden.



Members of the **St. Pete Young Professionals** joined us for a **Work Day in Apri**l in the future Majeed Discovery Garden, planting over 450 grasses and plants along the McKay Creek buffer zone.



Members of the St. Pete Young Professionals planted over 400 new grasses along the McKay Creek Corrdidor in the MDG.

Earth Day Weekend was celebrated at the gardens, complete with a Spring Orchid & Plant Sale, the annual Tour of Public & Private Gardens, and a Plein Aire in the Gardens with the Professional Association of Visual Artists (PAVA).



Visitors shop from local vendor, Art Stone Orchids, at the Spring Orchid & Plant Sale over Earth Day Weekend.



Great Turnout for PAAHC 2023

By **Shaune** 'Ferguson, Event Chair

The Pinellas African American Heritage Celebration (PAAHC) returned to the Florida BotanicalGardens for the second year in a row. I am not sure how this happened, but PAAHC 2023 was an even bigger event and ran smoother than last year! I believe that just goes to show with the right community partners we can bring this event to Pinellas County for years to come.

This year, in addition to the usual performances, artwork, and delicious food vendors, organizers added a Children's Area complete with potting activity sponsored by our friends at Anona United Methodist Church. The Library Mobile from Largo Public Library, the Play-Express from the City of Largo, and snow-cone vendor Mz SnoBiz rounded out our exciting children's area. There really was entertainment and fun for the family of all ages.

Yet again this year, Pinellas County Schools (PCS) students submitted 44 original pieces of artwork to display in the Gallery at Creative Pinellas. PCS

students also performed dance routines and R&B songs on our Main Stage. Speaking of the Main Stage, Pinellas Technical College stage production students and their teacher Jeffrey Wilson did a wonderful job running the sound system for all the performances.

That is what I love the most about the Pinellas African American Heritage Celebration. It is an opportunity to display the many skills and talents of Pinellas County Schools students and the community at large. The PAAHC is an opportunity to introduce the Gardens, Heritage Village, and Creative Pinellas to the African American community and it is an opportunity to present the many business vendors and entertainers to people who they would not have encountered otherwise. As long as we continue to have the support of the community and our partners, we will continue to showcase Black history and culture at the Pinellas African American Heritage Celebration.



Students from Melrose Elementary perform on the Main Stage.



Photos by: Priscilla Wyatt



Village, featuring local Black artist's work.



Local Black-owned business, Blingin with Britt Accessories, participated in the PAAHC mini-market.



Guests pose for a photo at the 2023 Pinellas African American Heritage Celebration.



flbgfoundation.org Open 7 am to 5 pm



creativepinellas.org Open noon to 5 pm



pinellascounty.org/Heritage Open 10 am to 4 pm

Easily accessible from two entrances: 12520 Ulmerton Rd. Largo, FL 33774 and 12211 Walsingham Rd., Largo, FL 33778



Celebrate at Pinewood

(Florida Botanical Gardens, Creative Pinellas, Heritage Village)

every 3rd Saturday of the month.

At the Florida Botanical Gardens: Enjoy a Florida Spring-see our Magnolias, Gardenias, Amaryllis, and more! Browse our What's in Bloom page for all you may see when you visit: https://flbgfoundation. org/inbloom.

At Creative Pinellas: Join us in the galleries for a family BINGO Scavenger Hunt and experience the 2023 Emerging Artist Exhibition from 10 Pinellas County Artists. Perfect for all ages and families!

Free to attend. https://creativepinellas.org/ event/third-saturdays-at-pinewood/

At Heritage Village: Join us on Saturday, May 20 from noon -1 pm for our Historic House Concert Series @ Heritage Village featuring musician Bob Anthony. In partnership with Radio St. Pete, Sunshine 96.7FM! This event is free, family and pet friendly. www.pinellascounty.org/heritage

Grants Awarded for FY 22 & 23

We would like to highlight a few of the major accomplishments of the initiatives outlined in our strategic plan, grants awarded to the Florida Botanical Gardens Foundation. Many thanks to our Development Team and our Education and Interpretive Plan Committees for their hard work in procuring applicable grant monies for our organization.

Pinellas Community Foundation Operating Grant Awarded in January of 2022 for \$15,000.

- Designated to Growing Up Wild programming, this grant funded a contract educator position, materials, and programs.
- Growing Up Wild curriculum is through the Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies, includes STEAM components, and is especially geared toward ages 3-7.
- The funds from this grant allowed us to offer these educational programs at no cost to attendees, serving visitors to the Florida Botanical Gardens and the community at large.
- We also funded the hiring of a Growing Up Wild Educator, on an annual contract basis through December 2022, as well as purchased materials to be used in the future Majeed Discovery Garden.
- Throughout the duration of the grant, we hosted field trips, small-group classes, workshops, and public events all focused on children's sense of wonder about nature through outdoor exploration.

Tourist Development Council and Visit St. Pete Clearwater Elite Event Funding Program Awarded in September 2022 for \$15,000.

- This grant funded the marketing and sponsorship of our annual Holiday Lights in the Gardens event for 2022.
- These funds went towards a detailed marketing plan, which specialized in out-of-state visitors, and expanded our reach to the Tampa Bay area. We were able to increase our digital marketing, through Google and YouTube ads, and target specific demographics and keywords related to the event.

- This also fostered a better relationship with Visit St. Pete Clearwater, who hosted a display within the event and participated in supplemental events held throughout the season.

Department of State Division of Arts & Culture Cultural Facilities Grant Awarded in August 2022 for \$300,000.

- Awarded to support the Majeed Discovery Garden, and will specifically fund the concrete and carpentry portions of the scope of work.
- These materials have been utilized in the creation of the Outdoor Classroom, which will serve as a central location within the MDG, for educational programming, workshops, field trips, summer camps, and children's birthday parties.

Tampa Bay Water Source Water Protection Mini-Grant Awarded in December of 2022 for \$3,000.

- This will fund the design, creation, and installation of six colorful and engaging new interpretive signs in the Wetlands Walkway.
- The theme for the project is "Appreciating, conserving, and protecting wetlands is an essential part of source water protection."
- The goal is to significantly increase appreciation and stewardship of Florida's wetlands and is in line with our current initiatives to enhance the interpretation of the Florida Botanical Gardens for our visitors.



Margaret Gates, Emily Goot, & Alison Nourse-Miller accept funds from the Board of Directors at Tampa Bay Water.

Membership Update

From Guest Experience Manager, Carol Cortright



With the Fall Grand
Opening of the new Majeed
Discovery Garden (MDG),
a special place for children,
the Florida Botanical
Gardens Foundation is
pleased to announce our
newly revamped Family
Membership category,

which takes effect October 1, 2023.

This special level invites up to two parents, grandparents or legal guardians and up to three children under the age of 18, to enjoy all the wonderful benefits of Garden membership, including discounts on MDG programs and events*, and reciprocal visitation at other participating botanical gardens across the United States and beyond.

The new Family Membership will include one Junior Nature Explorer kit for each child under 18

included on the membership application at the time of purchase. Family Memberships are valid for one year from the date of sign up.

Our new Family Membership policy begins
October 1, 2023, after which all existing Family
Memberships consisting of a total of four members
where the additional two members are adults ages
18 or older, will be allowed to expire at their current
dates.

Membership options for groups of more than two adults over age 18 include a Supporter Membership for \$250.00 (which includes up to four Adult membership cards) or purchasing separate Individual (\$40.00) or Dual (\$60.00) Memberships.

* Majeed Discovery Garden discounts will be offered to Members holding a Family-level membership or higher; these discounts will not be available at the Individual or Dual Membership levels.

Welcome to a Our New Board Member

Shauné Ferguson



Shauné Ferguson is an instructional recruiter for Pinellas County Schools. Prior to her current role in Human Resources, Shauné worked as a Social Studies teacher for middle school. Shauné is also the president of the Pinellas Alliance of Black School Educators, and she is an Ambassador for The Green Book of Tampa Bay. Shauné fell in love with the Gardens after planning an intimate event for educators in the McKay Creek Plaza. Since then, she has become the event chair for the reintroduction of the Pinellas African American Heritage Celebration. She looks forward to serving on the board, lending her skills to the various committees, and continuing to participate in the many awesome events at the Gardens for years to come.

We wish to *thank you* for joining us for the Annual Meeting for Fiscal Year 2022

By: Emily Goot, Executive Director



This was our first year back to an in-person meeting since 2020, and we were so grateful to those who could join us. We transitioned to a Saturday morning event after previously being held in the evenings, on March 11, 2023.

The morning began with a reception in the Magnolia Room, with a light continental breakfast from our neighboring Indian Rocks Catering. We began our presentation of the Annual Report and concluded with docent-led hard hat tours of the Majeed Discovery Garden (MDG). If you weren't able to join us, we have included a brief recap, and you can read more about the current construction of the MDG, our Volunteer of the Year, and more in the Annual Report FY 22, www.flbgfoundation.org/AR2022.

During the last fiscal year, we have seen several changes in our organization, which include the permanency of our Guest Experience Manager, Carol Cortright, and the incoming of our Administrative Assistant, Allie Fisher. Of course, we would be remiss not to mention our former Executive Director, Vernon Bryant, who has recently transitioned into a role on the Board of Directors.

We would like to recognize each of our dedicated Board of Directors for their constant commitment to seeing this organization flourish. They truly go above and beyond the call of duty of a volunteer, to serve on the board and also be involved in our standing committees, ad hoc committees, and event planning committees.

We also have an outstanding pool of volunteers. In the last fiscal year, we accumulated over 5,000 volunteer hours through public events, private workshops and tours, the Botanical Bounty Gift Shop, and of course, board participation. We could not run our events and programming without this assistance, and we wish to thank all of you who participate.

Finally, we wish to thank our members and our donors. It is through your consistent renewals and gifts that we can not only operate, but fulfill our mission to create an environment at the Florida Botanical Gardens for the community to come together for education, inspiration, and enjoyment.

As mentioned, the Florida Botanical Gardens Foundation proudly recognized Connie Hite as Volunteer of the Year for Fiscal Year 2022 and presented a certificate of our appreciation during the ceremony.

An update of our Strategic Plan initiatives included grants awarded, as well as event statistics for FY 22. In addition to local grants, we secured over \$60,000 in individual, company, and corporate sponsorships for our events in the last fiscal year. We hosted or sponsored over 25 in-person events at the Florida Botanical Gardens, reaching a wide range of audiences and encompassing various price points. We saw an increased collaboration with our on-site partners: Creative Pinellas, Heritage Village, UF/ IFAS Extension, and 4-H. As well as off-site partners, including the Florida Nursery, Growers Landscape Association, Florida Farm Bureau, Florida West Coast Orchid Society, City of Largo, Family Center on Deafness, Professional Association of Visual Artists, Habitat for Humanity, Great Explorations, Anona United Methodist Church, WEDU PBS, Pinellas Education Foundation, Tampa Bay Times, Pinellas Alliance of Black School Educators.

Internally, we implemented the creation and oversight of individual planning committees for each event, for improved efficiency and effectiveness of resources to ensure successful events. This also allowed us to create individualized marketing plans for each event, based on the event committee's

decision. Overall, we reached a goal of 100% profitable events. While this may not be a priority for all events, as many serve as what we call "friend raisers", one of our priorities as a nonprofit organization is to raise funds for the Florida Botanical Gardens.

The final initiative out of the Strategic Plan we'd like to highlight is that we have collaborated with Pinellas County Parks and Conservation Resources to identify an appropriate location to serve as a Welcome Center for the Florida Botanical Gardens. This also includes the relocation of the Florida Botanical Gardens Foundation gift shop and offices and will involve the conversion of the Tropical Pavilion. A new location for the gift shop will provide a better chance to engage visitors to the Gardens, and members, donors, and volunteers of the Foundation.

This space will be independently managed by the Foundation, which means it can be open during weekends and on government holidays, allowing for prime visitation. A portion of the space will be designated for our offices, providing a quality staff and volunteer work environment that facilitates present needs and meets future growth. Ultimately, it is an investment in the future of the Florida Botanical Gardens and our Foundation.

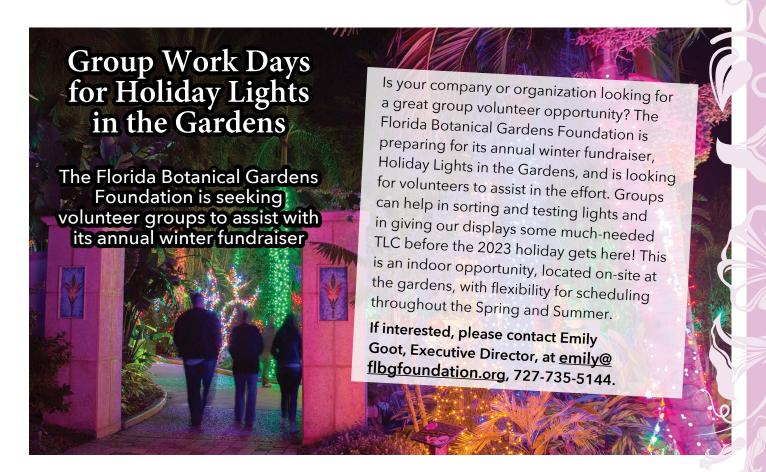
We are excited to share these accomplishments from FY 22 and objectives for FY 23 with our members, donors, volunteers, and everyone interested in the organization and the Florida Botanical Gardens. There are many compelling prospects on the horizon, and we will continue to follow the mission of the Foundation and goals of the strategic plan in the years to come.

Guests venture into the Outdoor Classroom, currently under construction, opening this summer.





Members of the Foundation enjoyed hard hat tours of the MDG.



Don't Miss Out! Month-Long Admission



Marie Selby Botanical Gardens recently put into effect the 90-mile Exclusion Rule. However, for the month of May, Florida Botanical Gardens Foundation members will receive free admission to both the Downtown Sarasota and Historic Point Campus. CURRENT EXHIBIT: Tiffany: The Pursuit of Beauty in Nature on view through June 25 at the Downtown Sarasota campus Visit https://selby.org/dsc/dsc-exhibitions/tiffany-the-pursuit-of-beauty-in-nature/ to learn more. This offer is valid for the month of May 2023 only. The

offer applies to regular daily admission only and does not include major fundraising events and may not be combined with any other discounts. Offer extends to one (1) adult at the Individual level; up to two (2) adults at the Dual/Family or higher with up to two (2) children under age 18 when they present a valid membership card and photo ID at the Downtown Sarasota and Historic Spanish Point campus in Osprey.



MISSION: The Florida Botanical Gardens Foundation is committed to creating an environment at the Florida Botanical Gardens for the community to come together for education, inspiration and enjoyment.

VISION: For the garden to be a premier destination that provides nourishment for the spirit.

VALUES: To ethically, inclusively and respectfully serve our visitors, Foundation members and donors through

Advocacy: Advocate for the Florida Botanical Gardens as a locally treasured and globally renowned entity.

Collaboration: Develop and foster effective partnerships with our donors, members, volunteers, Pinellas County Government (especially Parks &

Conservation Resources), and other organizations that support our mission.

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion: Deliver resources and programming that serve people of all ages, abilities, cultures and incomes.

Financial Security: Secure financial resources to support our Foundation goals and to help maintain and develop

Inspiration: Lift our visitor's spirits, touch their hearts and engage their minds through our endeavors.

Stewardship: Manage the resources entrusted to the Foundation to ensure the conservation and preservation of the natural environment to better serve our current and future generations.

Board of Directors

Iohn Thomas, President Vivian Haicken, Vice President Alison Nourse-Miller, Vice President Martha Vorob, Treasurer Mary Sweeny, Secretary Vernon Bryant Dan Beaver Peter Chiefari Pat Dieterich Emma Eshbaugh

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Paul Cozzie Parks & Conservation Resources Director Spencer Curtis North County Operations Manager

Professional Staff

Emily Goot, Executive Director Allison Fisher, Administrative Assistant Carol Cortright, Guest Experience Manager

Statement: The Florida Botanical Gardens Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)(3).

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www.twitter.com/FLBotanical | 📵 www.instagram.com/FLBotanicalGardens

Thank you for joining us for the Spring Wreath Workshop on Saturday, May 6th.



We will be hosting two Holiday Wreath Workshops in November and December, we hope you can attend.

See Page 7 for more events.

