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Edible Academy complex

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EDIBLE ACADEMY NEWSLETTER FALL 2016

NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDEN



Local schoolchildren celebrate the Edible Academy groundbreaking with (left to right): Gregory Long, Chief Executive Officer and The William C. Steere Sr. President, NYBG; Tom Finkelpearl, Commissioner, NYC Department of Cultural Affairs; Ruben Diaz Jr., Bronx Borough President; and Jeffrey Dinowitz, New York State Assemblyman.

On October 27, 2016, a group of NYBG's Board of Trustees and friends gathered to celebrate the 60th year of the Children's Gardening Program with the groundbreaking ceremony for the Edible Academy complex. This special celebration marked the beginning of a new era at NYBG. When completed, the Edible Academy, the centerpiece of which is the Ruth Rea Howell Family Garden, will revolutionize and enhance NYBG's garden-based educational programs and offer life-changing opportunities to children from the Bronx and Greater New York City.

The state-of-the-art complex will also double the number of on-site learners from 50,000 to 100,000 annually. In addition, the Edible Academy's programming will be expanded to offer distance learning opportunities, additional teacher and educator training, cooking demonstrations, and special events. With this important initiative, the Garden will reach a broader audience than ever before.



Clockwise from top: Children's Gardening Program 60th Reunion Alumni Celebration, September 17, 2016; Children in the Ruth Rea Howell Family Garden; Garden Crafters, 1958

NYBG's 125th Anniversary might have made the most headlines during 2016, but it was just one of many anniversaries celebrated across the Garden this year. In September, alumni, instructors, and current participants in the Children's Gardening Program gathered to celebrate 60 years of encouraging children to get their hands into the soil to grow and harvest everything from eggplant to corn.

After 60 years, the Children's Gardening Program has become a generational affair for many participants. New student Reuben Price's mother, Liza, participated from '88-'91,

and his grandmother, Jane, was in the program from '67-'71. All three were in attendance.

NYBG Trustee Dianne Renwick, an Associate Justice of the New York Appellate Division of the Supreme Court and graduate of the Children's Gardening Program, welcomed attendees. She noted that the activities of the Ruth Rea Howell Family Garden do more than just instill a lifelong love of gardening, "[The Garden] restores your soul. You are at peace when you come in here."

The Ruth Rea Howell Family Garden is home to more than just gardeners helping the plants grow: over 65,000 honeybees also live here in an on-site apiary. These fascinating and social insects are important helpers for the 1.5-acre garden's successful seasonal harvest of the organic vegetables shared with students, teachers and visitors. The Family Garden honeybees have their moment in the spotlight during the garden's popular *Dig, Plant, Grow!* program as part of the fall "Pollinator Pals" theme. Visitors learn firsthand about the life of a honeybee by taking a close look at a real apiary and an observation hive, sampling local and Family Garden honey, and exploring the Family Garden with a pollinator puppet. Cooking demonstrations feature fruit-focused and honey-highlighted recipes.

The Family Garden isn't the only place honeybees visit on the NYBG campus. In fact, honeybees can fly between three and five miles to forage for nectar and pollen, making good use of the Garden's grounds. By the end of the growing season, the Family Garden apiaries will hold up to 40 pounds per apiary super (the individual boxes that make up a langstroth-style hive) for a grand total of 100 pounds or more of honey. Every fall, Family Garden staff members collect a wonderful honey harvest, with the unique flavors drawn from the Botanical Garden's varied plant collections' nectar. Some honey is left for the bees to eat all winter; the rest is shared with employees and volunteers.

With the completion of the new Edible Academy complex in 2018, visitors will be able to see the bees flying in and out of their apiary from the Edible Academy Overlook, which will also give an expansive view of the Thain Family Forest and bordering Bronx River.



Harvesting honey from NYBG's apiary



Annie Novak with her book, *The Rooftop Growing Guide*

In cities running out of the resources and space to plant expansive gardens at ground level, NYBG Manager of the Edible Academy Annie Novak suggests simply looking up. In her new book, *The Rooftop Growing Guide*, she turns her own experiences running Eagle Street Rooftop Farm in Greenpoint, Brooklyn, into an accessible guide to rooftop gardening. A member of the NYBG family for more than a decade, Annie's passion for gardening has been shared with hundreds of thousands of children in the Ruth Rea Howell Family Garden.

As the head farmer and co-founder of the first commercial green rooftop farm in the country, Annie has joined the ranks of New York City's most knowledgeable urban gardeners, many of whom offered their own stories and tips through personal essays and interviews published in the book. Annie's passion and intellectual curiosity shine as she describes the basics of raising vegetables, herbs, and flowers to the more complex processes of crop planning, hydroponics, and pest management. Complete with illustrations by the author and vibrant photos of her 6,000-square-foot rooftop garden, the book takes its readers on a creative journey through the steps of rooftop farming. *The Rooftop Growing Guide* serves as a tool for gardeners across the country and will inspire everyone to take their green thumbs up to the roof.