

NYBG/125

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: January 20, 2017

NYBG Exhibition *Wild Medicine in the Tropics* Brings the Visitor to the Rain Forest to Learn About its Curative Bounty

Running January 21–February 12, 2017, Exhibition Highlights Include Valentine's Day Weekend Events and Family Programming



The Upland Tropical Rain Forest Gallery in the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory is home to many of the medicinal plants featured in *Wild Medicine in the Tropics*.

Bronx, NY— The New York Botanical Garden's winter exhibition, *Wild Medicine in the Tropics*, brings the visitor to the rain forest to learn about its curative bounty. Opening on January 21 and running through February 12, 2017, the exhibition draws on the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory's richly varied permanent collection of tropical trees, exotic flowers, and desert succulents to underscore the essential role that plants play in human health.

With interpretive signage, an award-winning iPhone app, and related programming for adults and children, *Wild Medicine in the Tropics* shows how cultures around the world rely on plants for everything from medicine to cosmetics and features plants that are essential to a wide variety of healing traditions.

The winter period between the Garden's major seasonal shows, when the climate in the Conservatory is inviting (65 to 75 degrees Fahrenheit, depending on the plant collections in a particular gallery) is an ideal time for visitors to immerse themselves in the Conservatory's rich collections, a product of the Garden's long history of scientific research and conservation in the tropics.

Mankind Has Long Used Plants to Fight Disease and Protect Health

People have relied on the healing power of plants for millennia. Today, 25 percent of prescription medicines are derived from plant ingredients, and 4.5 billion people worldwide use plants for part of their health care needs. During *Wild Medicine in the Tropics*, visitors will encounter more than 50 highlighted plant species and varieties found in different parts of the world that have been especially valued for their importance in promoting health or fighting disease.



From Central and South America, the bark of the cinchona tree (genus *Cinchona*) is the source of quinine, long used to prevent and treat malaria as well as to give tonic water its distinctive taste. In traditional Chinese medicine, the ephedra plant (genus *Ephedra*) has been used for thousands of years to alleviate the symptoms of asthma, allergies, and colds. It is the original source of the popular decongestants ephedrine and pseudoephedrine. And from Madagascar comes the rosy periwinkle (*Catharanthus roseus*, shown at left), a pretty perennial with pink flowers whose leaves are the source of the powerful compounds vincristine and vinblastine, used in chemotherapy to fight cancer.

Also, to show that plant-based medicine can taste delicious as well as be therapeutic, informative signage will explain how the seeds of the tropical tree species *Theobroma cacao* are turned into one of mankind's favorite treats—chocolate. Enjoyed for its rich flavor, chocolate also has medicinal properties. Theobromine, the main active ingredient in chocolate, is a stimulant that dilates blood vessels, improving blood flow, while another ingredient, theophylline, is used to treat asthma and relieve congestion.

Mobile App and Programming Add Interactive Elements to *Wild Medicine*

The ***Wild Medicine* mobile app** for iPhones enables interaction with a number of featured medicinal plants throughout the Conservatory's galleries—saw palmetto, coconut palm, kava, cacao, jaborandi, curare, tropical blueberries, aloe, and more. As visitors encounter the physical signs marking featured plants in the various galleries, they can view animations on their iPhones showing how the plants heal the body. The *Wild Medicine* app, available for free download through the iTunes app store, won the first-place gold award in the mobile applications category of the Media & Technology Muse Awards in 2014, presented by the American Alliance of Museums.

During *Wild Medicine in the Tropics*, visitors can also enjoy special programs and activities to round out their tropical Garden experience. **Culinary Kids Weekend** will celebrate the relationships among plants, farms, and favorite foods. Family Garden staff will offer cooking demonstrations, recipes, and hands-on activities, including the science of kitchen chemistry. (Saturday, February 18–Monday, February 20 [Presidents' Day]; 11 a.m.–3 p.m., with daily cooking demonstrations at 1 p.m. featuring kid-friendly recipes.)

On **Valentine's Day Weekend**, Saturday and Sunday, February 11 & 12, roaming guides will be on hand from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. to talk about the many plants at the Garden that have been used as aphrodisiacs. At 2 & 3 p.m., there will be chocolate mini-seminars and tastings; from 1 to 5 p.m., a poet will be on hand to craft special poems for visitors. Beer, wine, and champagne will be available for purchase at a pop-up bar in the Conservatory.

At the Everett Children's Adventure Garden, **Wintertime Wonders** will allow children of all ages to take a closer look at the wonders of plants and animals in winter. In the Children's Adventure Garden's cozy Discovery Center, kids will make bark rubbings and a necklace made of buds, count tree rings, and head back into the winter Garden with a field notebook to discover the vital sparks of life that lie just below the surface of this quiet season. (Tuesday, January 24–Sunday, March 19; starting at 1:30 p.m. on weekdays and 10 a.m. on weekends and running until 30 minutes before the Garden closes.)

Take an Ecotour of the World in the Comfort of the Conservatory

The Garden's permanent ecotour, ***A World of Plants***, allows visitors to discover not only the medicinal plants featured during *Wild Medicine in the Tropics*, but also aquatic plants, unusual species, and the process of evolutionary change. The journey begins with the Conservatory's collection of palms. ***Palms of the World*** features species that occur in warm regions across the globe, including the coconut palm and saw palmetto, both of which have medicinal uses. Towering palms, cycads, and ferns surround a large pool that reflects the iconic dome of the Conservatory, 90 feet above. A stroll through the Conservatory is also a journey through time. Many plants such as cycads are survivors of great evolutionary changes. Their leaves are not that different today from the leaves of their ancestors geological ages ago.

In the Conservatory's ***Lowland Tropical Rain Forest Gallery***, a Healer's House features displays that illustrate how traditional healers use plants to treat human illnesses as well as how ethnobotanists gather and preserve the plants and the healers' knowledge. Ethnobotany—the study of the relationship between plants and people—not only preserves centuries-old knowledge but also points toward plants that may be useful in pharmacological research or in the ever-growing market for herbal medicine. In addition to the cacao tree, kava, tamarind, annatto, jaborandi, and curare are among the many medicinal plants that visitors will encounter in this gallery. At the far end of the gallery, a skywalk leads up into the rain forest canopy.

In the ***Aquatic Plants and Vines Gallery***, lush curtains of tropical vines drape from the arching lattice of the glasshouse roof around an elegant fountain and pool displaying aquatic plants. The Conservatory's aquatic collection—plants adapted to life in the water—includes papyrus, the plant used to make some of the earliest paper. Medicinal plants on display include the rosyperiwinkle, the tea plant, and passion flower.



As visitors enter the ***Upland Tropical Rain Forest Gallery***, they see an encased orchid display featuring an assortment of exotic specimens from the Garden's spectacular collection. High-elevation plants dangle throughout the gallery, and tree ferns, mosses, relatives of blueberries, and bromeliads recreate the environment one would find in a cloud forest. Among the medicinal plants in this gallery is the cinchona tree, the source of malaria-fighting quinine.

Leaving the gallery, an underground passageway features a display of breathtaking light-box photographs that highlight some of the remote locations around the world where Garden scientists have collected and studied the diversity of plant life, including healing plants.

The ***Deserts of the Americas*** and the ***Deserts of Africa Galleries*** house plants such as cacti, agave, euphorbias, and "living stones," or *Lithops*, which have adapted to dry and challenging climates. Many of the desert plants on display in raised beds are succulents, the collective name for the thick-fleshed species known for water storage. Ephedra, jojoba, and aloe are some of the medicinal plants that call the desert home.

In the ***Hanging Baskets Gallery***, a display of carnivorous Venus flytraps and pitcher plants and containers of deliciously fragrant citrus plants, whose fruits are the source of health-enhancing juices, conclude the Conservatory's global trek.

Other Garden Attractions Both Indoors and Out

Showcasing masterworks from one of the world's great private libraries devoted to the plant world, ***Redouté to Warhol: Bunny Mellon's Botanical Art*** will be on view in the William D. Rondina and Giovanni Foroni LoFaro Gallery of the LuEsther T. Mertz Library through February 12, 2017.

This stunning exhibition comprises nearly 80 works, ranging from the 14th through the 20th centuries, from the Oak Spring Garden Library, which the late Rachel Lambert ("Bunny") Mellon founded on her estate in Upperville, Virginia. Among the featured works—many never before exhibited publicly—are rare masterpieces by renowned botanical artists such as

Jacques Le Moyne de Morgues (ca. 1533–88) and Pierre-Joseph Redouté (1759–1840) as well as 20th-century paintings by Pablo Picasso (1881–1973) and Andy Warhol (1928–87).

Bunny Mellon, who died in 2014 at age 103, was an accomplished garden designer, legendary art collector, and noted philanthropist. Among her many important gardening and landscaping endeavors, she designed the White House Rose Garden during the administration of President John F. Kennedy.

As part of the Garden's yearlong series of 125th anniversary events, ***Celebrating The New York Botanical Garden: 125 Years*** will be on display through February 19 in Ross Gallery, featuring large-format photographs by renowned photographer Larry Lederman. For 13 years, Lederman has been observing and photographing the Garden in all seasons and at all times of day. His captivating new photographs of the magnificent gardens, diverse collections, and the Haupt Conservatory convey a unique artistic vision and the unparalleled natural beauty of the Garden.

Another indoor exhibition is ***Plants and Fungi: Ten Current Research Stories***, located in the Britton Science Rotunda and Gallery of the Library Building. This exhibition offers a look at some of the mysteries of the plant world that are being unraveled by Garden scientists through their global field trips.



Georg Dionysius Ehret (German, 1708-70)
[Southern Magnolia], ca. 1737
Bodycolor on vellum.
Oak Spring Garden Library

Since the 1890s, scientists at the Garden have traveled the globe to better understand plants and fungi, their relationship to their environments, and their many uses by people around the world. Visitors can get a glimpse of their valuable work through this exhibition. Photographs, diagrams, unusual plant specimens, artifacts from explorations in remote locales, and audio/visual presentations bring to life 10 research projects, from the study of mosses and lichens to Brazil nuts and vanilla orchids.

The displays and presentations reveal how scientists use modern tools such as DNA fingerprinting as well as classic techniques of plant exploration, and how they are studying such topics as genetic diversity in rice and a nerve toxin in cycads that may provide insight into Alzheimer's disease.

For intrepid lovers of winter, outdoor attractions abound. A ***Tram Tour*** highlights collections on the Garden's 250 acres of historic landscapes and tree specimens from

around the world. The **Native Plant Garden**, designed to be vibrant in all seasons, features thousands of local plant species.

The 50-acre **Thain Family Forest** is the largest remnant in New York City of the original forest that once covered most of the New York metropolitan area. The **Arthur and Janet Ross Conifer Arboretum**, 37 acres around the Conservatory, exhibits 250 specimens of the world's temperate pines, spruces, and firs as they live in the wild. This collection, the first planted at the Garden, is more than 100 years old. The **Benenson Ornamental Conifers**, 15 acres in the southeastern corner of the Garden, is a collection of more than 400 hybrids and horticultural selections of conifers, including some of the world's rarest dwarf, weeping, and unusual forms of conifers.

Adult Education classes provide opportunities to learn new skills and even start a new career in botanical art, botany, floral design, gardening, horticultural therapy, horticulture, and landscape design. **NYBG Shop** offers a wide assortment of items for garden enthusiasts, nature lovers, and souvenir seekers.

No matter the weather, there is plenty to see and do at The New York Botanical Garden. For more information, visit nybg.org or call 718.817.8700.

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Mobile Media supported by Bloomberg Philanthropies

Exhibitions in the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory are made possible by the Estate of Enid A. Haupt.

The New York Botanical Garden is a museum of plants located at Bronx River Parkway (Exit 7W) and Fordham Road. It is easy to reach by Metro-North Railroad or subway. Through February 16, 2017, the Garden is open Tuesday through Sunday and Monday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. The best way to enjoy the Garden is with the *All-Garden Pass*, which includes admission to the grounds as well as to seasonal gardens, exhibitions, and attractions such as the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory, Everett Children's Adventure Garden, and Tram Tour. For ticket pricing, please check our Web site. For more information, please call 718.817.8700 or visit nybg.org

The New York Botanical Garden, 2900 Southern Boulevard, Bronx, New York 10458

The New York Botanical Garden is located on property owned in full by the City of New York, and its operation is made possible in part by public funds provided through the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs. A portion of the Garden's general operating funds is provided by The New York City Council and The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. The Bronx Borough President and Bronx elected representatives in the City Council and State Legislature provide leadership funding.

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