

NYBG/125

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NYBG Launches New Urban Naturalist Certificate Program This Spring Program Taps into Growing Interest in Citizen Science and Conservation



Learning about the natural world at NYBG

Bronx, NY—The New York Botanical Garden will launch its new Urban Naturalist Certificate Program in spring 2017. This unique program will equip students with the formal skills they need to observe, interpret, and document the plant and wildlife that abound in our teeming metropolis. Led by former NYC Parks Chief Naturalist Mike Feller, NYBG's team of expert naturalists will use the Botanical Garden's grounds in the Bronx and select city parks as living labs to investigate the complex interrelationships among species, and to discover how the urban environment sustains our upland and coastal wetland ecosystems.

Beginning April 19 and meeting three times a week for five weeks, the Urban Naturalist Certificate Program combines classroom sessions, guest lectures, hands-on activities on the Garden grounds, and weekly field excursions. Specifically designed to train people to become citizen scientists committed to conservation and environmental stewardship, the Certificate is also valuable for those engaged or interested in starting interpretive, educational tours of urban wild areas or parks. Registration for the Program is open now, with special introductory rates for NYBG Members and Non-Members available before March 15, dependent upon space availability.

The Program focuses on vascular (having tissues to transport nutrients, water, and minerals) and non-vascular plants, and invertebrates and vertebrates of New York City's uplands and coastal wetland ecosystems, emphasizing the critical conservation issues facing each habitat. Program Coordinator Mike Feller spent 31 years as Chief Naturalist for NYC Parks Natural Resources Group (NRG), where he supervised the design and execution of numerous ecological restorations. Feller also spearheaded the creation of the Forever Wild Program that established 51 nature preserves throughout New York City.

“We believe The New York Botanical Garden’s Urban Naturalist Certificate Program is the first of its kind to offer a general comprehensive introduction to natural history—both flora and fauna—in an urban context,” said Feller. “It will provide a primer in ‘ecological literacy’ and observation and identification skills using premier New York City natural areas. We’re looking forward to getting out in the field with the students.”

During the course, students will employ all five senses to observe the natural world; utilize scientific tools, including a metric ruler, loupe, dichotomous key, and binoculars, to identify plant and animal species; create scientifically useful written descriptions and photographic records of observation; interpret nature by leading walks, uploading to iNaturalist or NYBG’s New York City EcoFlora project, or presenting independent observations and experiences; explore phylogeny (the evolution of organisms) and genetic connections on the evolutionary Tree of Life; identify key environmental conservation issues that affect New York City; and hear specialized talks by renowned Garden scientists.

For more information and to register, visit <http://www.nybg.org/adulted/urban-naturalist.php>.

About Adult Education at The New York Botanical Garden

As a leader in horticultural education for more than 125 years, The New York Botanical Garden offers the nation’s largest plant-related continuing education program for adults. The Garden remains at the forefront of horticultural education, offering Certificates in eight disciplines that feature classes designed by professionals in their fields—including members of the Garden’s horticulture and science staff—honed to deliver the necessary skills to start a new career or rewarding personal pursuit. The Garden also brings students in contact with internationally renowned experts in Gardening, Landscape Design, Botany, and Botanical Art through lectures and master classes offered each season. Students also have access to the Garden’s world-famous and unparalleled resources, including its 50 display gardens featuring more than one million plants as well as the LuEsther T. Mertz Library with collections containing well over one million items. Learn more about the Adult Education Program at nybg.org/adulted.

About The New York Botanical Garden

Since its founding in 1891, The New York Botanical Garden has been an oasis in this busy metropolis. A National Historic Landmark, this 250-acre site’s verdant landscape supports over one million living plants in extensive collections. Each year more than one million visitors enjoy the Garden not only for its remarkable diversity of tropical, temperate, and desert flora, but also for programming that ranges from renowned exhibitions in the Haupt Conservatory to festivals on Daffodil Hill.

The Garden is a major educational institution. More than 300,000 people annually—among them Bronx families, schoolchildren, teachers, and Adult Education students—learn about plant science, ecology, and healthful eating through NYBG’s hands-on, curriculum-based programming. NYBG operates one of the world’s largest plant research and conservation programs, with nearly 200 staff members—including 80 Ph.D. scientists—working in the Garden’s state-of-the-art molecular labs as well as in the field, where they lead programs in 49 countries.

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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, bus, or subway. The Garden is open year-round, Tuesday through Sunday and Monday federal holidays, from 10 a.m. to 6 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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