



THE NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDEN

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A New Look at Charles Darwin
in a 2008 Exhibition at The New York Botanical Garden
Darwin's Garden: An Evolutionary Adventure

Highlighting Darwin's Little-Known Work with Plants

April 25 – June 15, 2008

The New York Botanical Garden will highlight Charles Darwin's substantial yet little-known contributions to the study and understanding of plants during a two-month celebration of Darwin's life and work. Exhibitions in three Botanical Garden venues, a symposium with leading Darwin scholars, and related programs will paint a portrait of Darwin as a botanist and plantsman and demonstrate how Darwin's botanical experiments and discoveries helped shape his contributions to the understanding of life in general. Entitled *Darwin's Garden: An Evolutionary Adventure*, the exhibition will open on April 25, 2008, and run through June 15, 2008, heralding the 2009 bicentennial of his birth.

Darwin's Garden Re-created

Darwin's Garden: An Evolutionary Adventure will include exhibitions in the Garden's Enid A. Haupt Conservatory, LuEsther T. Mertz Library gallery, and Everett Children's Adventure Garden. The exhibition in the Haupt Conservatory will tell the story of how Darwin's careful observations and experiments in his gardens and greenhouses inspired his thinking about natural selection and evolution. It will re-create Darwin's own garden at his home in England, Down House, and represent the surrounding orchards and meadows where the naturalist made many further scientific observations. Some of Darwin's ingenious experiments with plants, which focused on plant movement, climbing plants, pollination and fertilization, and adaptations in orchids, will also be re-created as part of the exhibition. Displays of key plants that inspired Darwin's thinking—primroses, carnivorous plants, orchids, and climbing plants—will further illustrate the central role of plants in the development of Darwin's ideas.

The Inside Story: Darwin's Writings, Collections, Laboratory

The Mertz Library's William D. Rondina and Giovanni Foroni LoFaro Gallery will feature original materials from Darwin's own writings and collections among illustrated books, manuscripts, and other historical documents that offer insight into Darwin's thinking and demonstrate the importance of botany throughout his life. Themes explored in the gallery exhibition will include Darwin's botanical education, his historic voyage on the HMS *Beagle*, his professional friendships with botanists, and the publication of his revolutionary book *On the Origin of Species*, and his investigations into plant sexuality and sensitivity (how plants respond to touch, light, gravity, and chemical substances). The documents and archival materials will come from the Mertz Library's extensive collection of Darwiniana as well as from the library and herbarium at Cambridge University in England, the Royal Horticultural Society's Lindley Library in London, and the Archives at the Harvard Botany Libraries.

In the Everett Children's Adventure Garden, an interactive exhibition including plants important to the development of the concept of evolution will invite hands-on exploration. Carnivorous plants will also be on display. Darwin the man will be brought to life through a re-creation of his research laboratory, an assortment of his working tools, a child-friendly timeline of the highlights of Darwin's life, and a replica

– more –

of the *Beagle*, together with a map of the ship's five-year voyage to South America and around the world. In the Ruth Rea Howell Family Garden, a "Relative Row" plot will display the variation within the nightshade plant family, which includes tomatoes. A comparison of wild and domesticated plants, modeled on Darwin's own "weed" garden that he used for observation, will demonstrate desirable traits in plants, both wild and domesticated, and describe the process of natural selection.

Symposium, Evolutionary Tour, Interactive Demonstrations, and More

The New York Botanical Garden, in collaboration with the American Museum of Natural History, will also host a two-day symposium during the exhibition. The symposium will feature presentations by leading scientists, historians, philosophers, and environmentalists—the current thinking by some of the world's leading Darwin experts. Because Darwin's theories continue to be a significant force in the world today, the symposium will offer an extraordinary opportunity to hear top scholars and commentators discuss the impact of Darwin and his findings.

Throughout the duration of the exhibition, an "Evolutionary Tour" will allow families to walk—step by step, plant by plant—through the tree of life among living plants in the Garden's collections. In the Haupt Conservatory and surrounding outdoor plantings, this approximately 40-minute walking tour will highlight significant plants in the evolutionary tree of life. It will be accompanied by commentary accessible via visitors' cell phones. In addition, a number of interactive demonstrations around the Garden's grounds will enable visitors to observe plants the way Darwin himself did and to see his experiments with plants.

Weekend programs will feature drop-in lectures, workshops, and guided tours. In addition, performances will feature music and poetry from Darwin's era, much of it heavily influenced by nature.

Exhibition Leadership

The New York Botanical Garden is proud to have historian David Kohn, Ph.D., a renowned Darwin expert and Professor at Drew University, as Curator of *Darwin's Garden: An Evolutionary Adventure*. John Parker, Ph.D., Professor of Plant Cytogenetics and Director of the Cambridge Botanic Garden, is Advisor to the Botanical Garden on the project. In addition, an Advisory Committee of distinguished Darwin scholars will contribute a wide range of intellectual perspectives. Senior New York Botanical Garden staff, including Vice President for Horticulture and Living Collections Todd Forrest and Mertz Library Director Susan Fraser, round out the leadership of this comprehensive exhibition.

After the exhibition at The New York Botanical Garden, portions of *Darwin's Garden: An Evolutionary Adventure* will be displayed at the Huntington Botanical Garden in Pasadena, California.

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Exhibitions in the Mertz Library are made possible by the LuEsther T. Mertz Charitable Trust, William D. Rondina and The Carlisle Collection, and The Kurt Berliner Foundation.

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

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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 or subway. The Botanical Garden is open Tuesday through Sunday and Monday federal holidays from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. April through October. For more information, please call 718.817.8700 or visit our Web site at www.nybg.org

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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