

# THE NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDEN

*Studying, exhibiting, and conserving plants for 120 years*

For Immediate Release  
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## **Mario Batali Kicks Off the Vegetable Gardening Season at The New York Botanical Garden**

### **Celebrity Chef Announces New Program, *Mario Batali's Edible Garden*, on the Occasion of the Ruth Rea Howell Family Garden's 25th Anniversary**

On April 12, 2011, at The New York Botanical Garden, celebrity chef Mario Batali was joined by New York City Council Majority Leader Joel Rivera to launch the vegetable gardening season and to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the Ruth Rea Howell Family Garden, one of the Botanical Garden's great treasures. The Family Garden is also the new home of *Mario Batali's Edible Garden*, which debuts this spring and will feature special programming at harvest time. Batali was also joined by Bronx schoolchildren as he prepared the themed gardening beds and planted some of the first vegetables in *Mario Batali's Edible Garden*, which will feature the chef's favorite ingredients.

The event celebrated the Ruth Rea Howell Family Garden's role in educating the public on the benefits of vegetable gardening and using fresh produce in daily meals. The Family Garden, which is funded in part through the MetLife Healthy Families Program, provides students, teachers, children, and families with the hands-on excitement of growing vegetables and learning about gardening and plants. With help from parents, volunteers, and staff, children have fun getting their hands dirty with themed gardening activities that change monthly. The Family Garden is open Tuesdays through Sundays and Monday holidays, 1:30–6 p.m. during the vegetable gardening season.

Throughout the spring and summer, visitors to the Family Garden will be able to see a cornucopia of fresh food growing in *Mario Batali's Edible Garden* display beds: oregano, onions, basil, tomatoes, eggplants, wheat, sweet peppers, and hot peppers in “**The Otto Pizza Garden;**” escarole, endives, radicchio, fennel, parsley, chard, rosemary, broccoli, arugula, fava beans, shallots, beets, dandelion greens, kale, lettuce, and turnips in “**The Babbo Beets, Beens, Garlic, and Greens Garden;**” and strawberries and a variety of raspberries in “**Batali's Berry Patch.**”



Beginning August 27, *Mario Batali's Edible Garden* program will allow families to enjoy daily gardening activities and cooking demonstrations that showcase kid-friendly recipes with the chance to sample and search for ingredients in the garden. “There’s nothing better than this place in New York City,” Batali said about The New York Botanical Garden. “It’s my center of where I hang out. It’s where I take my kids. It’s where I take my out-of-town friends. It’s where I want to be.”

“Twenty-five years ago, to the day, the Family Garden opened its gates and hundreds of thousands of children have since planted, watered, weeded, and harvested vegetables here,” said Gregory Long, President of The New York Botanical Garden. “We have been teaching families how to garden for 100 years. Today, we are also celebrating a new chapter in the Family Garden, our exciting partnership with Mario Batali and the Mario Batali Foundation. Without the support of our elected officials and people like Mario Batali, thousands and thousands of children would never have the opportunity to get their hands dirty, dig in the dirt, and discover the pleasures of gardening.”

Karen Washington, Bronx community gardener and Board Member of The New York Botanical Garden, served as Mistress of Ceremony for the festivities. Introducing the guests of honor, Ms. Washington said, “Each year, over 30,000 students, teachers and families come here to the Family Garden to learn about gardening. Gardening is so important to our health, to the health of our environment, and to the health of our communities. Community gardens are near and dear to my heart. Edible gardening is one of the surest ways to ensure good nutrition for children and adults alike. Mario Batali is a champion of children’s health and education and his support means that thousands of families, students, and teachers get to discover what I know to be true—that gardening can change lives.”

Councilman Joel Rivera said, “We all live in the concrete jungle of New York City but that doesn’t mean our youth cannot experience a healthier lifestyle especially with The New York Botanical Garden in our backyard. This program is a great exercise for the inner city children of our community to get their hands dirty in the garden and see the fruits of their labor in a few months’ time.”

The Honorable Joseph Crowley said, “We need to do all we can to empower our children to make healthy decisions and live long and happy lives. Giving them the chance to grow their own fruits and vegetables, as with the hands-on gardening done here at the Botanical Garden, helps children develop a lifelong appreciation for healthy eating. Through its many programs, the Botanical Garden has opened the door to fresh produce and the experience of gardening for families in our community, providing an invaluable opportunity to learn about the many benefits of growing and eating healthy foods. And, with the addition of Chef Batali’s new exhibit, even more families will learn how to transfer the garden to the dinner table.”

“This program complements the work MetLife Foundation and The New York Botanical Garden have already initiated as part of the MetLife Healthy Families Program to help educate and encourage people to live healthier lives through good nutrition and exercise,” said Dennis White, president and CEO, MetLife Foundation. “We are pleased to partner with The New York Botanical Garden to make the Family Garden and its programs accessible to the New York community.”

*Family and Community Gardening programs sponsored by The Scotts Miracle-Gro Company*

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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 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, Rock Garden, and Tram Tour: \$20 for adults, \$18 for seniors and students with ID, \$8 for children ages 2–12, free for children under 2. A *Grounds-Only Pass* is also available: \$6 for adults, \$5 for adult Bronx Residents; \$3 for seniors and students with ID, \$1 for children ages 2–12, free for children under 2. Grounds-only admission is free all day on Wednesdays and from 10 a.m. to noon on Saturdays. For more information, please call 718.817.8700 or visit [nybg.org](http://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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Images available.