

For Immediate Release  
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## **Major Gift from Leon Levy Foundation Provides for New Native Plant Garden**

### **Commitment to Conservation, Native Plants, and the Public/Private Partnership**

The New York Botanical Garden has received a gift of \$15 million from the Leon Levy Foundation to create a new Native Plant Garden on 3.5 acres in the Botanical Garden, adjacent to the native Forest and Rock Garden. It will serve as a center for the study and display of plants native to the northeastern United States. This garden will be one of the first projects in the Botanical Garden's Master Plan, being developed by the Philadelphia-based landscape architecture firm Olin Partnership, to restore the "Heart of the Garden" and address other broad challenges and opportunities throughout the historic landscape.

The New York Botanical Garden is the embodiment of the definition of a botanical garden—a place containing documented, arranged collections of living plants for the purposes of scientific research, conservation, education, display, and enjoyment. The new Native Plant Garden, which is planned to be designed as a horticultural celebration of the diversity of native plants, will allow The New York Botanical Garden to better serve the growing interest in native plants and conservation inspired by concerns about invasive species and climate change. It will also be a further testament to the institution's role as one of the leading botanical gardens in the world. This new garden will emphasize the connection to the Forest and highlight the Botanical Garden's long tradition of studying and conserving our native flora. It will also provide the opportunity to teach people the role that native plants and ecosystems play in supporting birds and other wildlife.

Taking advantage of the site's diverse growing conditions, which range from sunny, wet meadow to dry, deep shade, the Native Plant Garden will display a variety of native plants combined beautifully in an integrated and holistic design. It will accommodate groups of visitors while preserving a sense of intimacy for individuals. It will provide new opportunities for education through interpretive signage and teaching areas.

### **Stewardship, Philanthropy, and the Public Private Partnership**

Gregory Long, President and CEO of the Botanical Garden, speaking on behalf of Chairman Wilson Nolen and the entire Board of The New York Botanical Garden, said: "We are deeply grateful to our Board member Shelby White and Leon Levy, her late husband and friend of the Garden, as well as Leon Levy Foundation trustee Liz Moynihan, for their stewardship of this historic landscape. With this gift, and their abiding interest in botanical gardens and conservation, they are helping us create an inviting new garden, address pressing conservation issues, and educate our visitors and the public about the significance and beauty of native plants."

Mr. Long praised the foresight, leadership, and dedication of the donors as "dedicated philanthropists with broad-ranging interests in education and the world of plants." He noted, "The Botanical Garden is a place of ineffable beauty and charm not only because of the landscape, but also because of the spirit of the people who care about it. The new Native Plant Garden will be a wonderful garden for visitors to enjoy and a superb addition to this museum of plants."

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Shelby White, founding trustee of the Leon Levy Foundation and vice chairman of the Botanical Garden Board commented, “The New York Botanical Garden is one of the great green treasures of our city. The Foundation has been a longtime supporter of its continuing development. Not only will the new Native Plant Garden celebrate the beauty of native plants, it will also serve as an important laboratory for plant study and conservation.”

### **Renaissance of The New York Botanical Garden**

In the past 15 years, The New York Botanical Garden has taken major steps repair and improve its century-old infrastructure, create world-class horticulture exhibitions, expand renowned adult and children’s education programs, develop scientific research programs and projects with worldwide impact on environment and conservation policy, and create an endowment.

Over the next several years, the Garden will invest more than \$100 million dollars in restoration and preservation projects that will save the Botanical Garden’s historic landscapes, redesign gardens, and restore collections. This gift for the Native Plant Garden is a critical part of that effort that will further the renaissance that has been the hallmark of the Garden’s recent history.

The restoration of a historic 15-acre collection, the Benenson Ornamental Conifers, in 2004 and plans to restore and enhance the 50-acre, first-growth Forest, which with its centuries-old trees, is the largest remnant of the mixed hardwood forest that once covered much of New York City, are two ambitious yet critical examples of a renaissance in progress.

Since its founding in 1891, The New York Botanical Garden has been a vital component of New York City’s cultural landscape. Dedicated to collecting and disseminating knowledge about plants and their diversity, evolutionary history, and benefit to human life, the Garden is among the premier botanical gardens in the world. The Garden’s unparalleled programs in plant research and discovery, public horticulture, and children’s education have earned it recognition as “America’s Garden.”

The Botanical Garden pursues a tripartite mission of botanical science, public education, and horticultural excellence. There are 50 gardens, plant collections, and displays across its 250-acre National Historic Landmark site in the Bronx. In the “Heart of the Garden” lie the Bronx River and the unique native Forest.

The plant collections, gardens, and natural landscape serve as a living laboratory for the study of plants and a classroom for students of all ages. Botanical Garden scientists have studied, described, and documented the plants of the world for over a century. Today the Garden’s science staff includes world-renowned scientists, doctoral candidates, and post doctoral researchers. Their research has contributed significantly to our understanding of biodiversity, plant evolution, terrestrial ecology, and economic botany.

The Botanical Garden is also home to a broad array of educational programs for students of all ages. Nearly 375,000 children, their families, and teachers from across the New York metropolitan area attended children’s programs in fiscal year 2007. With over 900 classes on a wide variety of plant-related subjects offered each year, the Continuing Education program is the largest of any botanical garden in the world. The Garden’s landscape and living collections are an integral part of many of the courses.

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The New York Botanical Garden is an advocate for the plant kingdom. The Garden pursues its mission through its role as a museum of plant collections arranged in gardens and landscapes across its National Historic Landmark site; through its comprehensive education programs in horticulture and plant science; and through the wide-ranging research programs of the International Plant Science Center.

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. Located at Bronx River Parkway (Exit 7W) and Fordham Road, the Botanical Garden is easy to reach by Metro-North Railroad or subway. For more information, please call 718.817.8700 or visit our Web site at [www.nybg.org](http://www.nybg.org)

The Leon Levy Foundation, founded in 2004, is a private, not-for-profit foundation created from the estate of Leon Levy, a legendary investor with a longstanding commitment to philanthropy. The Foundation's overarching goal is to continue the tradition of humanism characteristic of Mr. Levy by supporting scholarship at the highest level, ultimately advancing knowledge and improving the lives of individuals and society at large. The Foundation supports the protection of natural landscapes and wildlife habitats, as well as maintenance of botanical gardens and parks in the New York City area. Foundation grants aid a variety of initiatives at The New York Botanical Garden and throughout its National Historic Landmark site, including the Leon Levy Visitor Center established in 2004 as the main entrance to the Garden.

**Media Contacts:**

Karl Lauby, 718.817.8637; [klauby@nybg.org](mailto:klauby@nybg.org)

Melinda Manning, 718.817.8659; [mmanning@nybg.org](mailto:mmanning@nybg.org)