



THE NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDEN

For Immediate Release
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Application Deadline for Leading Hands-On Horticulture Career Training Program Fast Approaching

**Apply by August 15 for The New York Botanical Garden's
School of Professional Horticulture**

Whether motivated by the social and economic influences of sustainable living or a desire to engage in more rewarding work, many students and career changers in the United States and abroad are turning to education programs that may yield new, green professions. Such a program exists at The New York Botanical Garden, training students to create and beautify green spaces. Driven by a mission to cultivate horticulturists of the highest caliber who will take on leadership positions in public and private venues, the Botanical Garden's School of Professional Horticultural (SOPH) is now accepting applications for the class of 2013. Interested, qualified individuals have until August 15, 2010, to apply. Prospective students may visit nybg.org/edu/soph to print out, complete, and return the online application form: <http://www.nybg.org/files/ApplicationFormProfessionalHorticulture.pdf>.

The School of Professional Horticulture, a renowned, two-year, full-time program, has trained hundreds of skilled horticulturists for nearly 80 years. Alumni have gone on to pursue rewarding careers in gardening and landscape design, and in consulting for estates and major public parks.

Classroom and Hands-on Field Training Cultivate Students for Future Horticulture Leadership Positions

"Students who attend The School of Professional Horticulture not only receive the benefit of embarking on a rewarding career, they have the advantage of receiving comprehensive hands-on training in horticulture in the unique setting of New York City," said SOPH Director Charles Yurgalevitch, Ph.D.

"Students learn the craft alongside the world-class horticultural staff of The New York Botanical Garden. That experience is unparalleled," continued Dr. Yurgalevitch. "But students are also exposed to cutting-edge horticulture projects around the region such as green roofs, green walls, urban agriculture, public parks, private estates, and nature preserves. It may not be obvious that New York City is such a tremendous environment in which to study horticulture, but the reality is that in many ways urban horticulture is where the creative energy is pushing the field forward fastest. As far as horticulture education goes, New York is where the action is."

Designed by leading horticulturists and botanists, the School's academic courses introduce and explore the multifaceted field of horticulture. Students in the program, which begins in February, tackle classes in botany, horticultural techniques, landscape design, and soil sciences, and attend lectures by world-renowned plant experts. The curriculum also includes career-focused business courses such as public speaking and business management.

As the growing season approaches, the program shifts from the classroom to horticulture training across the Botanical Garden's 250-acre landscape, a National Historic Landmark. Students go on weekly plant identification walks with curators and botanists, learning over 1,000 plants in the first year. Students also gain first-hand knowledge of the Garden's integrated pest management approach, learning how to minimize the impact on the environment through the use of native plants and sustainable practices.

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“It’s one of the few hands-on horticulture training programs in the world, and in my opinion, the best,” said first-year SOPH student Luis Marmol. “What sets the Garden’s two-year program apart from colleges and universities that offer a horticulture major is that it allows students to work alongside horticulture staff to gain real-world experience.”

Prior to attending the School of Professional Horticulture, Marmol, a native of Peru, interned at the Peace Palace in The Hague, where he helped research and restore an 18th-century royal garden.

The unmatched hands-on learning experiences in the School of Professional Horticulture include: assisting with the installation of the Garden’s blockbuster horticultural exhibitions such as *The Orchid Show* in the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory, America’s premier Victorian-era glasshouse; growing plants in the state-of-the-art Nolen Greenhouses for Living Collections for display in the Botanical Garden’s 50 gardens and plant collections; and learning how to maintain a rose collection in the award-winning Peggy Rockefeller Rose Garden. The School offers educational field trips to sites such as the ecologically important New Jersey Pine Barrens and the pioneering Eagle Street Rooftop Farm in Brooklyn, and the opportunity to visit and assess the horticultural practices at nurseries and private estates.

Admission to the SOPH program is selective and based on a combination of academic achievement, practical experience, and demonstrated commitment to the horticulture field. Prospective applicants should have 1,800 hours of previous horticultural work experience through internships, nursery work, or gardening. Classes are purposely kept small to ensure that each student receives the appropriate amount of attention from staff and to foster teamwork among students.

During the program, students are introduced to a variety of horticultural careers, and in their second year they must work a six-month internship in a business or institution of their choice. This internship in a professional horticulture venue allows students to apply what they’ve learned and to expand their skills. Ashley Burke, a 2010 graduate of SOPH, interned at the High Line, the popular elevated public park in Manhattan built on a former railway, which opened in June 2009. From April through September 2009, she worked extensively with the plans developed by the internationally renowned landscape architect firm James Corner Field Operations and with Dutch garden designer Piet Oudolf. Through this internship, Burke gained real-world experience working alongside SOPH alumna Melissa Fisher, the High Line’s Director of Horticulture and Operations, and has since started her own landscape design business based in Bedford, N.Y.

SOPH Boasts Impressive History and Lengthy Roster of Successful Alumni

The School of Professional Horticulture was established as a professional gardener-training program in 1932 by distinguished horticulturist Thomas H. Everett, an alumnus of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. Everett modeled the School after programs at British botanical gardens such as Kew, which combined practical and academic work in horticulture. In 2005 the School became accredited by the Accrediting Council for Continuing Education and Training, and certified by the U.S. Department of Education to administer Title IV financial aid funds (Pell grants and Direct Loans) to eligible students.

School of Professional Horticulture graduates have gone on to hold prominent positions, including Senior Associate Garden Editor for Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia, Inc., Head Gardener at Mount Usher Gardens in Ireland, Director of Horticulture at the High Line in New York City, Director of Horticulture for the Horticultural Society of New York, Head Curator at the Bermuda Botanical Gardens, Horticulture Manager at Minnetrista in Indiana, and Director of Arboretum, Grounds and Gardens at The New York Botanical Garden.

Ronda M. Brands, a 2009 SOPH graduate, came to the program with an M.A. in English and a background in development. She is now a freelance garden designer practicing in the New York City area, working on projects in association with renowned public garden designer Lynden B. Miller.

Their projects together include reinvigorations of the British Garden at Hanover Square and the Fort Tryon Park Heather Garden, design of Hudson River Park's Segment 5 Entry Garden, seasonal plantings for the Museum of Modern Art Sculpture Garden, and a garden for the U.S. Supreme Court. Brands has also completed a number of private design projects in Manhattan and the Boston area. "Gaining a diploma in horticulture from the Botanical Garden accelerated my career transition from arts administration to horticulture and provided a strong foundation for my work in public garden design," said Brands.

For additional information about the School visit nybg.org/edu/soph or call 718.817.8797.

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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 year-round, Tuesday through Sunday and Monday federal holidays. For more information, please call 718.817.8700 or visit www.nybg.org Read the Botanical Garden's popular blog, *Plant Talk: Inside The New York Botanical Garden* at nybg.org/wordpress.

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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