

For Immediate Release
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The New York Botanical Garden Cuts Ribbon for \$23 Million Pfizer Plant Research Laboratory

**“In Celebration of Plant Science” events through the weekend of May 19-21
offer behind-the-scenes tours to the public**

Philanthropist Lewis B. Cullman, President of Pfizer Human Health Karen Katen, Commissioner of New York City’s Department of Cultural Affairs Kate Levin, Congressman Joseph Crowley, best-selling author and neurologist Dr. Oliver Sacks, and several other leading government officials and scientists joined Botanical Garden representatives to cut the ribbon for the new \$23 million Pfizer Plant Research Laboratory on Tuesday, May 16, at 11 a.m. at The New York Botanical Garden. For six days, a rich program of tours, lectures, films, and other activities offer the public a rare opportunity to see a state-of-the-art molecular science facility and to meet the Botanical Garden’s scientists.

Dedication Remarks

At the dedication and ribbon-cutting ceremony, Gregory Long, President of The New York Botanical Garden, noted, “We are thrilled with this handsome new addition to the suite of modern buildings we have built in the past few years. The science that will take place in this laboratory is a continuation of our traditional interest in the naming of plants and the study of their evolutionary history, their ecology, their usefulness to humankind, and their conservation. But we are also moving in new directions with the study of plant genomics... We are the first botanical garden in the world to be undertaking this kind of investigation in a botanical garden setting.”

“Little did I know that what I had spawned would cause The New York Botanical Garden to become the preeminent botanical science institution in the world,” observed Mr. Cullman. “The molecular systematics program led to the genomics program. Who knows what’s next?” The Lewis B. and Dorothy Cullman Program for Molecular Systematics Studies, created and endowed by the Cullmans in 1994, applies the newest technologies in molecular biology to some of the oldest questions in plant evolution.

“At Pfizer,” stated Ms. Katen, “we believe that unlocking knowledge from the science of plants can benefit humankind with insights into preventing disease and preserving health.”

“The New York Botanical Garden—one of the City’s most spectacular and dynamic cultural institutions—holds the distinction of being both internationally preeminent and locally resonant,” said Commissioner Levin. “Whether by working to improve the health care of urban immigrant communities, educating graduate students and public schoolchildren, or providing residents and families a breathtaking sanctuary from city life, the Garden brings its world-class research to bear on the lives of New Yorkers every day.”

Congressman Crowley commented, “The New York Botanical Garden is a jewel, not only in the Bronx, New York City, and the United States, but it is a jewel of the world. The private and public commitment that we see here today at the grand opening of the Pfizer Plant Research Laboratory and to the Garden as a whole is something the Bronx can be proud of. I also want to recognize my colleague, Congressman José E. Serrano, for all the work he’s contributed toward this project.”

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Since 1999, Congressman Serrano has directed over \$9.5 million in funding to The New York Botanical Garden for plant research. He was unable to attend today's ceremony due to his responsibilities in Washington, D.C., but sent his remarks and best wishes. "The New York Botanical Garden is taking a giant step forward with the opening of its new plant research center. I am so pleased to have been able to secure funds over the years for this project, because it helps move the Botanical Garden into the 21st century and will bring world-class plant and biodiversity research to my home borough."

The new facility "brings Botanical Garden research scientists together under one roof and completes the campus of its International Plant Science Center, where scientists will gather from around the world to learn about plant biodiversity," concluded Dr. Sacks. "It marks a whole new era of science at the Garden, which should lead to new discoveries that may be essential to our survival as a species."

The Pfizer Plant Research Laboratory

In the new lab, Botanical Garden scientists, graduate students, and visiting scientists from around the world explore the inner workings of plants at the molecular level and conduct structural and chemical analyses, all to better understand, manage, and protect life on Earth. The lab is outfitted with the latest equipment for molecular research, including robotic workstations for delicate experiments, a scanning electron microscope, and a high-throughput DNA sequencer. The two-story, light-filled, state-of-the-art building, designed by Susan T. Rodriguez of Polshek Partnership Architects, overlooks a scenic wooded lake. Construction began in July 2004.

In addition to Dr. Sacks, who is best known for his collection of case histories of the neurological experience, *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*, eminent scientists at the grand opening included Edward O. Wilson, Ph.D., the renowned and award-winning expert on biodiversity, conservation, and sustainable development; James D. Watson, Ph.D., recipient of the Nobel Prize in Medicine for his co-discovery of the structure of the DNA molecule; and Gerald M. Edelman, M.D., Ph.D., recipient of the Nobel Prize in Medicine for his work on the structure and function of antibodies.

In Celebration of Plant Science

The ribbon-cutting ceremony was followed by behind-the-scenes tours of the new laboratory. It launches "In Celebration of Plant Science," a six-day program of special events, from lectures to film screenings, which will feature science activities at the Botanical Garden. "In Celebration of Plant Science" culminates the weekend of May 19–21. Visit the Garden's Web site at www.nybg.org for more information.

*Principal funding for the Pfizer Plant Research Laboratory
has been provided by the federal government through the leadership of Congressman José E. Serrano;
Pfizer and The Pfizer Foundation;
the State of New York through the leadership of Governor George E. Pataki;
and Lewis B. and Dorothy Cullman.*

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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 living 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 buildings and grounds of The New York Botanical Garden are owned by the City of New York. A portion of the Garden's general operating funds is provided by the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, 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.

The New York Botanical Garden is located at Bronx River Parkway (Exit 7W) and Fordham Road in the Bronx. The Botanical Garden is open year-round, Tuesday through Sunday and Monday federal holidays, from 10 a.m.–6 p.m. April through October and 10 a.m.–5 p.m. November through March. The best way to enjoy the Botanical Garden is with the *Combination Ticket*, which includes admission to the grounds, Conservatory, Rock Garden, Native Plant Garden, Everett Children's Adventure Garden, and Tram Tour, and costs \$13 for adults; \$11 for students and seniors; \$5 for children 2–12. Grounds admission is free to everyone on Wednesdays all day and on Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. For more information, visit www.nybg.org or call 718.817.8700.

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