
THE NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDEN

For immediate release
June 5, 2015

Dr. Ina Vandebroek Named Matthew Calbraith Perry Assistant Curator And Caribbean Program Director at The New York Botanical Garden

Documenting Medicinal Plant Use by Immigrant Communities in New York City And Their Home Countries is Dr. Vandebroek's Major Research Focus

The New York Botanical Garden is pleased to announce that Ina Vandebroek, Ph.D., has been appointed the Matthew Calbraith Perry Assistant Curator of Economic Botany. In this new role, Dr. Vandebroek will also become Director of the Garden's Caribbean Program.

In her 10 years at the Botanical Garden, Dr. Vandebroek has conducted extensive research into the use of medicinal plants by New York City immigrant communities and has used the results of her research to develop training programs and materials for healthcare providers so they understand how their immigrant patients use those plants. One of the goals of her work is to promote culturally sensitive healthcare for underserved communities.

Dr. Vandebroek's research shows that, even at a time of general loss of biological and cultural diversity worldwide, the use of plants as medicines remains popular in many communities today. Raising the awareness of healthcare practitioners about their patients' use of medicinal plants has the practical effect of reducing the chances for adverse reactions between the chemicals in plant-based remedies and traditional pharmaceuticals. It has the additional benefit of helping to establish a better dialogue and trusting relationship between those healthcare providers and their immigrant patients.

Dr. Vandebroek, who is fluent in Spanish, has 15 years of experience in research and international cooperation projects in Cuba, Bolivia, the Dominican Republic, and New York City. At the Garden, her work has largely focused on the Dominican community in both New York City and the Dominican Republic. Currently, she conducts fieldwork in Jamaica, researching the use of plants for health and nutrition there and among the Jamaican immigrant community in New York City.

"In this new role, my geographic focus will be Caribbean-wide," said Dr. Vandebroek. "By studying the plants that people use for healthcare, you realize everything is connected. It's not only a question of health but also nutrition, food security, the maintenance of cultural traditions, and the conservation of plants. These cultural traditions are here to stay, and they adapt to the circumstances of time and place."



Dr. Ina Vandebroek

Dr. Vandebroek joined the Garden in 2005 as a Postdoctoral Research Associate. More recently, she has been an Ethnomedical Research Specialist at the Garden's Institute of Economic Botany, which studies the relationship between people and plants.

A native of Belgium, she received her Ph.D. from Ghent University.

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The New York Botanical Garden is a museum of plants, an educational institution, and a scientific research organization. Founded in 1891, the Botanical Garden is one of the world's preeminent centers for studying plants at all levels, from the whole organism down to its DNA. Garden scientists conduct fundamental research on plants and fungi globally, as well as on the many relationships between plants and people. A National Historic Landmark, the Garden's 250-acre site is one of the greatest botanical gardens in the world and the largest in any city in the United States, distinguished by the beauty of its diverse landscape and extensive collections and gardens, as well as by the scope and excellence of its programs in horticulture, education, and science. Learn more: nybg.org

The New York Botanical Garden, 2900 Southern Boulevard, Bronx, New York 10458

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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