

For Immediate Release  
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**LEON LEVY VISITOR CENTER,  
DRAMATIC NEW GATEWAY TO GARDEN,  
OPENS TO PUBLIC MAY 1, 2004**

*Designed by Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer Associates, Levy Visitor Center unites architecture and landscape; marks next phase in master program of renewal; offers enhanced services and visitor orientation*

*Historic Conifer Arboretum to be dedicated to Arthur and Janet Ross*

Following a private dedication ceremony on April 29, **The New York Botanical Garden**—250 acres of unmatched natural beauty in the heart of the New York City metropolitan region—opens to the public its new **Leon Levy Visitor Center** on **May 1, 2004**. Designed by **Hugh Hardy**, Founding Partner of the distinguished architecture firm Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer Associates, the Levy Visitor Center comprises four separate structures that form an elegant and functional transition from the urban surroundings of the City to the pastoral environment of the Garden.

The **three-and-a-half-acre Levy Visitor Center**—located at the main Conservatory Gate entrance—consolidates the Garden’s visitor services while expanding its amenities. These include a greatly expanded 7,500-square-foot **Shop in the Garden**, with both indoor and outdoor components; a **new cafe**; a **gracious outdoor plaza** with **seating, plantings**, and a **reflecting pool**; and a **visitor orientation area**. Altogether, the long-needed facility offers visitors one of the most appealing gathering places of any of New York City’s cultural institutions.

**Garden President Gregory Long** says, “We are thrilled to be dedicating the Leon Levy Visitor Center, which is architecturally distinguished, functionally appealing, and aesthetically consistent with the magnificent setting beyond its borders. We are deeply grateful to Shelby White and the late Leon Levy. As a result of their generosity, hundreds of thousands of annual visitors to The New York Botanical Garden will enjoy a tremendously enhanced experience.”

**Hugh Hardy** states, “The Leon Levy Visitor Center represents a fusion of architecture and landscape that uses stone, steel, and glass to create a new, simply stated environment. It is public architecture that is free of associations with wealth and privilege, instead defining a place of discovery and delight for all the diverse populations of New York and beyond.”

### **Leon Levy Visitor Center**

Surrounded by a “U”-shaped formation of gentle hills and mature trees, the new complex comprises four buildings that surround a large plaza. Totaling 27,500 square feet, the buildings, constructed of dark Hamilton New York State bluestone, wood, steel, and glass, combine modern design with natural materials and forms. Undulating sweeps of “gull-winged” wood roofs and wood rafters, low rustic stone walls, and expansive glass walls unite to create an elegant, spacious, and airy complex that blends organically into the landscape. Indeed, the entire complex represents a harmonious marriage of architecture and nature, integrating the Garden’s landscape of rock outcroppings, historic specimen trees, and green rolling hills.

To enter the Center, visitors pass through the original Conservatory Gate, a massive, curved stone wall, and arrive in the open-air plaza, where many Garden vistas come into view. This space also provides shelter, ticketing, and comprehensive information about the Garden and its programs, including electronic image screens announcing the day’s events.

Anchoring the east side of the Levy Visitor Center is the new **Shop in the Garden**, which is triple the size of the former Shop, and includes an outdoor plant shop. The Shop offers one of the country’s finest selections of horticultural and gardening books, including, for the first time, rare and antiquarian books, as well as plants, gardening tools, and décor for the home and garden.

The west side of the plaza houses a **cafe** that has been carefully sited so that the public will see the majestic dark-green conifers on the adjoining hillside. Serving light fare—including coffee and pastries in the morning; sandwiches, soups, and salads midday; and soft drinks, beer, wine, and desserts in the afternoon—the cafe includes indoor and outdoor seating for 200 people.

A central 24-foot-wide **promenade**, paved in portage bluestone, extends 450 feet into the Garden, terminating at a circular reflecting pool. This marks the transition from the Levy Visitor Center to the rest of the Garden, providing a beautiful spot for rest and contemplation. Visitors may also wait here for the Garden tram, or choose to follow one of the pathways that radiate out from the complex, leading to the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory and its surrounding gardens, the Forest, the Everett Children’s Adventure Garden, and the historic LuEsther T. Mertz Library building.

One of the signature aspects of the design of the Leon Levy Visitor Center is its carefully framed views of the Garden. One of these views is of the Garden’s historic **Arthur and Janet Ross Conifer Arboretum**—newly named in honor of the Rosses’ longstanding support of the Garden. Covering 37 acres, the Ross Conifer Arboretum is one of the world’s most important collections of pines, firs, and spruces, majestic and venerable trees that grace a rolling landscape.

“The Arthur and Janet Ross Endowment Fund for Trees has ensured the safeguarding and maintenance of the Garden’s superb Conifer Arboretum,” says **Gregory Long**. “I think of projects like this and the Levy Visitor Center and the recently renovated Jane Watson Irwin Perennial Garden as powerful symbols of the renaissance that has been occurring at the Garden over the past decade—a range of improvements that serve our varied publics, including plant lovers and families, museum-goers and outdoor enthusiasts, and the educational and scientific communities.”

**Kim Tripp, Senior Vice President for Horticulture and Living Collections** at the Garden, notes, “When visitors arrive at the Garden through the new Leon Levy Visitor Center, they are surrounded by one of the most distinguished plant collections in any botanical garden in the world—a striking landscape of mature pines arrayed across dramatic rock outcrops and rolling turf. With trees that were among the first ever planted in the Garden’s collections, this is among the most beautiful aspects of our historic Janet and Arthur Ross Conifer Arboretum. Among the extraordinary plants that grace this landscape are an exquisite grove of cinnamon-barked Tanyosho pines from Japan, a glorious Himalayan white pine, and Chinese red pines. These provide a fitting introduction to the rich diversity of the 48 gardens and plant collections, seasonal exhibitions, and glorious landscapes that await the public.”

## **Master Plan**

The Leon Levy Visitor Center and the Janet and Arthur Ross Arboretum are part of the \$200,000,000 **master plan** for capital improvements to the 112-year old Garden. This massive renewal began in 1997, with the opening of the restored Enid A. Haupt Conservatory—the nation’s largest Victorian glasshouse—and continued in the following year with the opening of the Everett Children’s Adventure Garden. In 2002, the International Plant Science Center opened, comprising the new William and Lynda Steere Herbarium and the restored LuEsther T. Mertz Library. Subsequent phases of the master plan include the Nolen Glasshouses for Living Collections, which will be the largest behind-the-scenes glasshouses for growing plants at any botanical garden in the United States, opening in spring 2005, and the Pfizer Plant Research Laboratory, opening in 2006.

## **Leon Levy Visitor Center Architects**

Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer Associates, LLP, based in New York and Los Angeles, is one of the country’s leading planning, architecture, and interior design firms, known for its design of public spaces and buildings for civic, educational, and commercial use. The firm also designed the Garden’s Arthur and Janet Ross Lecture Hall, which opened in May 2001.

## **Support**

The Garden gratefully acknowledges the leadership funding that has made the Leon Levy Visitor Center possible and thanks the following for their generosity: Shelby White and the late Leon Levy; Mr. and Mrs. Wilson Nolen; Dr. and Mrs. Karl M. F. Wamsler; The Kresge Foundation; Adam R. Rose and Peter R. McQuillan; Mr. and Mrs. Jonathan C. Clay; The Honorable George E. Pataki, Governor of the State of New York; The Honorable Guy J. Velella, New York State Senator; and the New York State Assembly Bronx Delegation.

## **The New York Botanical Garden**

A National Historic Landmark founded in 1891, The New York Botanical Garden is one of the world’s great collections of plants, the region’s leading educational center about gardening and horticulture, and an international center for plant research. It is a living museum of plants on a 250-acre historic site, with the landmark Enid A. Haupt Conservatory, offering an ecotour of the world; the innovative Everett Children’s Adventure Garden, where children explore nature and plant science; and 48 magnificent gardens and plant collections. The New York Botanical Garden is located at Bronx River Parkway (Exit 7W) at Fordham Road, and is easy to reach by car or by a 20-minute ride on the Metro-North Railroad from Grand Central Terminal.

**Hours and Admission**

Open year-round, Tuesday through Sunday and on Monday holidays, 10 a.m.–6 p.m., April through October; 10 a.m.–5 p.m., November through March.

The regular Garden Combination Ticket includes grounds admission, the Conservatory, Rock Garden, Native Plant Garden, Tram Tour, and Everett Children’s Adventure Garden. Prices are: \$13 adults, \$11 students and seniors, \$5 children 2–12. Grounds admission is free all day Wednesdays and on Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m.

**Press Information**

For additional information and visual materials for the Leon Levy Visitor Center, including the Shop in the Garden, the new cafe, and other components, please contact Lisbeth Mark or Tiffany Lee at Jeanne Collins & Associates, LLC, New York City: 646-486-7050; [info@jcollinsassociates.com](mailto:info@jcollinsassociates.com).

For additional information about The New York Botanical Garden, please contact Karl Lauby or Melinda Manning at the Garden: 718-817-8616; [mmanning@nybg.org](mailto:mmanning@nybg.org).