

NYBG

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 15, 2021

The New York Botanical Garden Dedicates Its Historic Tulip Tree Allée to Honor John J. Hoffee, Trustee of the LuEsther T. Mertz Charitable Trust

Dedication Marks the Renaming of the Allée, Which Is Undergoing a Multiphase Replanting Project



Family of John J. Hoffee at the dedication on June 14, 2021 (NYBG Photo)

Bronx, NY—On Monday, June 14, 2021, The New York Botanical Garden (NYBG) dedicated its Tulip Tree Allée, a beloved and historic New York City Landmark, to honor John J. Hoffee (1942–2020), a Trustee of the LuEsther T. Mertz Charitable Trust and longtime friend of NYBG. The dedication ceremony for the newly renamed John J. Hoffee Tulip Tree Allée, which is undergoing a multiphase replanting project, included leaders from the Botanical Garden and the Mertz Charitable Trust.

The distinguished trees of the Hoffee Tulip Tree Allée were planted beginning in 1903, and have since become a signature feature of the Garden's landscape and living collections, beautiful in every season. Tulip trees (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) were chosen to complement a venerable native specimen preserved on the site. Known as the mother tree, it is among the oldest and largest trees at NYBG, standing more than 135 feet tall. In 2009 the Tulip Tree Allée was named a New York City Landmark, along with the Lillian Goldman Fountain of Life and LuEsther T. Mertz Library Building as part of the grandly designed site to which the Allée leads.

The New York Botanical Garden is fortunate to have nearly 30,000 magnificent trees in its gardens, living collections, and natural landscapes. Caring for them is among NYBG's top institutional priorities and the tulip trees in the historic Allée have been the most intensively cared for trees at the Garden. For nearly 120 years, NYBG horticulturists have worked to nurture, preserve, and protect them.

Arborists inspect and prune them regularly. Lightning protection and cables were installed to protect them from severe weather. As a direct result of this care, the tulip trees have thrived and exceeded their expected 100-year life span in New York City's urban setting.

In spite of this special care, the tulip trees have been experiencing gradual decline. In 2020 Garden arborists removed five trees from the Tulip Tree Allée that had naturally degenerated. Garden leadership, working with NYBG curators and outside specialists, determined that it was time to replant the Allée so that visitors will be able to enjoy this majestic Garden feature for the next century and beyond.

Landscape architect Laurie Olin has developed an elegant multiphase replanting plan. Phased tree removals, plantings of new trees, and other site improvements began in 2021 and will continue through 2024. Garden curators will continue to care for the celebrated mother tree—which had been preserved during the construction of the Library Building (1899–1901) and inspired the planting of the Allée—for as long as it remains healthy and viable.

“It is a fitting tribute to rename the historic Tulip Tree Allée in honor of John Hoffee,” said J. Barclay Collins II, Chair of the Board of The New York Botanical Garden. “He and his fellow Trustees at the LuEsther T. Mertz Charitable Trust have been primary forces in the development and resurgence of NYBG over the past 30 years. The John J. Hoffee Tulip Tree Allée will be a living legacy to be enjoyed by generations to come.”

Replanting a New York City Landmark

Conceived by preeminent landscape architect Calvert Vaux in 1895 and planted beginning in 1903, the newly renamed John J. Hoffee Tulip Tree Allée is the most historic, distinguished, and intensely cared for tree planting at the Garden. In spite of all this care, the impacts of nature, time, and an urban environment have ultimately caught up with the tulip trees. In August 2020, the mother tree lost several large limbs, and the strong southeasterly winds of tropical storm Isaias damaged nearly every



Library Building and Allée, ca. 1904; LuEsther T. Mertz Library Collection

tree in the Allée. Recognizing that the trees in the Allée will continue to decline as they age, Garden leadership, working with curators and outside specialists, determined in late 2020 that the Allée should be replanted according to the four-year, multiphase replanting plan developed by Laurie Olin.

The first phase of replanting began in January 2021 with the removal of four trees. In March 2021, ten new trees were planted, replacing those four trees and others removed previously. Olin's plan maintains mature trees

through each phase of the replanting process to provide scale and balance. The plan also preserves the mother tree for as long as it remains healthy. When replanting is finished in 2024, the John J. Hoffee Tulip Tree Allée will be completely renewed.

“The replanting is just one visible sign of our ongoing stewardship of NYBG’s living collections,” said Todd Forrest, NYBG’s Arthur Ross Vice President for Horticulture and Living Collections. “The new trees are healthy and vigorous, and we are confident that they will thrive in their new home. We are grateful to the LuEsther T. Mertz Charitable Trust, which has funded the project; to NYBG Trustee Robert A. Bartlett, Jr., who generously purchased the new trees; to the Tulip Tree Allée Committee of the Garden’s Board of Trustees, which is overseeing plans for the Allée; and to everyone else who has supported this important project.”

This project also included necessary improvement to the site’s drainage and other infrastructure. Dedicated drip irrigation will be installed for each new tree as it is planted to aid in its establishment.

About Tulip Trees

Named for their tulip-like, cupped yellow-and-orange spring flowers, tulip trees (*Liriodendron tulipifera*) are among the tallest and stately hardwood trees found in eastern North American forests. When they grow in the forest, tulip trees generally have straight trunks with no branches for 60 feet or more. Trees grown in the open, such as those in the Allée, produce large lower branches, which extend out from the main trunk at almost right angles, and large numbers of vertical branchlets extending upward. The complex architecture of these magnificent trees is most readily observed in winter, when the leaves have fallen away. This is also when it is possible to spot the clusters of winged seeds, which remain on the tree throughout the cold months.



The large, four-lobed leaves of tulip trees are unlike any other leaf, offering welcome shade in summer and gradually turning bright gold in fall. The common name of the tree, however, refers to the distinctive flowers, which emerge shortly after the leaves in spring. Opening in early summer, the large, upright flower cups are orange-yellow at the base and light green-yellow at the tips of the petals. Their beauty can be hard to appreciate when they remain on the tree, since they often cluster among the leaves high in the canopy. As they mature, the flowers fall to the ground, where they are easier to observe.

About The New York Botanical Garden

Founded in 1891, The New York Botanical Garden is the most comprehensive botanical garden in the world and an integral part of the cultural fabric of New York City, anchored in the Bronx. Visitors come to the Garden to connect with nature for joy, beauty, and respite, and for renowned plant-based exhibitions, music and dance, and poetry and lectures. Innovative children’s education programs promote environmental sustainability and nutrition awareness, graduate programs educate the next generation of botanists, while engaging classes inspire adults to remain lifelong learners. The 250-acre verdant landscape—which includes a 50-acre, old-growth forest—and the landmark Enid A. Haupt Conservatory support living collections of more than one million plants. Unparalleled resources are also held in the LuEsther T. Mertz Library, the world’s most important botanical and horticultural library with 11 million archival items spanning ten centuries, and William and Lynda Steere Herbarium,

the largest in the Western Hemisphere with 7.8 million plant and fungal specimens. Committed to protecting the planet's biodiversity and natural resources, Garden scientists work on-site in cutting-edge molecular labs and in areas worldwide where biodiversity is most at risk.

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*Generously underwritten by the LuEsther T. Mertz Charitable Trust
in honor of its Trustee John J. Hoffee*

Additional support by Robert A. Bartlett, Jr.

The New York Botanical Garden is located at 2900 Southern Boulevard, Bronx, New York 10458. For more information, visit nybg.org

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.

Contact: Nick Leshi: nleshi@nybg.org
Melinda Manning: mmanning@nybg.org

Images available.