

NYBG

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 1, 2022

NYBG's 2022 Black History Month Celebration Honors Barrier-Breaking Pioneers in Environmental Science, Agricultural Education, and the Arts

Tuesday, February 1 through Monday, February 28, 2022

Bronx, NY—This year, the annual celebration of Black History Month at The New York Botanical Garden (NYBG) honors barrier-breaking pioneers in environmental science and agricultural education and showcases current activists and advocates who are creating communities that foster representation, identity, and diversity in the arts and sciences. Online offerings explore the botanical legacy of the African Diaspora and the influential contributions of Black Americans to contemporary society. From programs that include inspiring performances and conversations to fascinating workshops, lectures, and readings, visitors can learn online and at NYBG about the profound ways in which plants and gardening are connected to community and culture.

Online offerings are available at <https://www.nybg.org/event/black-history-month-at-home/>
Programs at NYBG are noted below.

NYBG's 2022 Black History Month celebration features:

- **Welcome Message from New York City Councilmember Kevin Riley**, Council District 12, Northeast Bronx
- **Profiles in Resilience**
Hear from Black pioneers in horticulture, gardening, and urban farming whose work and advocacy are making significant impacts in their communities.
 - **An Urban Farmer Reconnects with Her Roots: Kadeesha Williams**
Video debuts February 7
Listen to former NYBG Community Horticulturist/Urban Agriculturist Kadeesha Williams discuss turning her dream of honoring her heritage and family identity in urban farming into a reality by founding the Iridescent Earth Collective.
 - **Plants as Liberation**
Series debuts February 11
In this wide-ranging series of interviews, featuring herbalists and house plant enthusiasts to farmers and gardeners, hear from Black people in the plant world and learn how they are using plants as a powerful expression of liberation and freedom.

- **Honoring a Community Gardening Icon: Karen Washington**
Learn more about NYBG Trustee Karen Washington, longtime Bronx farmer, community activist, and advocate for food justice, and her transformative work in urban farming for more than 30 years.
- **Food for Thought**
Enjoy a series of programs that examine the relationship of food to culture and identity, especially when languages or cultural traditions have been prohibited and erased.
 - **The Food Dialogues**
This webinar series kicked off NYBG's Foodways Initiative in the spring of 2021. It brought together prominent authors, chefs, and historians for important conversations that re-examined our notions of culture and identity through food. The moderator was Dr. Jessica B. Harris, America's leading expert on the food traditions of the African Diaspora. The three-part series premiered with Carla Hall and Tonya Hopkins, continued with Michael Twitty and JJ Johnson, and concluded with Von Diaz and Maricel Presilla.
 - **Afro-Indigenous Histories of Food and Gardening: Garifuna Plant Knowledge, Past and Present**
Exiled from their Caribbean homeland of Saint Vincent in the late 18th century, Garifuna Indigenous communities settled around the world. This video features Bronx community organizer and leading Garifuna culinary expert Isha Sumner and noted scholars of Afro-Caribbean culture Julie Chun Kim of Fordham University and Christina Welch of University of Winchester, UK. Together, they explore and personalize Garifuna food, knowledge, and uses of plants as defining elements of their culture and identity.
 - **Cookbook Review: Garifuna & Gullah Geechee Recipes**
Post debuts by February 7
Staff from NYBG's LuEsther T. Mertz Library review dishes from the cookbooks *Bress 'N'Nyam* and *Gran Cocina Latina*, both of which can be found in the Mertz Library. The Gullah Geechee people are descendants of enslaved Africans who worked on plantations in North and South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. The Garifuna people are descendants of the Afro-Indigenous people of St. Vincent who were exiled to countries throughout Central America. There is also Garifuna presence here in the Bronx.
 - **In the Shadow of Slavery: Africa's Food Legacy in the Atlantic World**
Much of the groundbreaking research by Professor Judith Carney of the University of California, Los Angeles, focuses on African contributions to New World agriculture and ecology. In this video of her 2021 online lecture, she shows how enslaved people established familiar foods from Africa, such as rice, okra, yams, black-eyed peas, and millet, as staples in their subsistence plots, which Carney calls the "botanical gardens of the dispossessed."

- **Performance as Expression**

Watch innovative performances by contemporary Black artists in genres that celebrate art and nature as powerful sources of creative inspiration.

- **Dr. Carolyn Finney's The N-Word: Nature, Revisited Rebroadcast & Conversation**

Video debuts February 15

In her performance *The N Word: Nature, Revisited*, writer and activist Dr. Carolyn Finney speaks about her relationship with nature and the history of Black environmentalism through the art of storytelling. Join us to view part of the performance and hear Dr. Finney's meditations on this personal project in a conversation with Arvolyn Hill, Manager of NYBG's Everett Children's Adventure Garden.

- **Garden Sets**

Blog post debuts February 7

Judith Insell and the JOTB Collective perform free jazz on the picturesque veranda of the Lillian and Amy Goldman Stone Mill in a video recorded in October 2020. In an accompanying blog post, viewers can learn more about how the improvisational, radical harmonic concepts of avant-garde jazz allow her to explore her relationship with nature, art, and music.

- **Kids Corner**

Gather the kids for storytelling and activity time to discover the cultural influences of the African Diaspora and reinforce the importance of green space and caring for the natural world.

- **Storytime at the Everett Children's Adventure Garden**

Weekdays; 10 a.m.–5 p.m.; Self-guided

Saturdays & Sundays; 1:30 p.m. at Swamp Oak Story Spot

Read *Where's Rodney* by Carmen Bogan (author) and Floyd Cooper (illustrator), a fictional story about a young Black boy's transformative day communing with nature during a class field trip to a national park.

- **Rooted in Plants**

New video debuts weekly, beginning Feb. 7

NYBG's Teen Explainers reveal the legacy of the African Diaspora in the plant world. Videos feature West African Indigo dyeing; enslaved African Edmond Albius' discovery of the best way to pollinate the vanilla orchid; and enslaved African Caesar's use of Plantain to make a poison antidote that earned his freedom. All videos include specimens from NYBG's William and Lynda Steere Herbarium.

- **Botanical Legacies**

Learn about the contributions of Black scientists to our understanding of the plant world, the rich legacy of plants and knowledge about their uses that enslaved Africans brought to America, and other plant stories.

- **Focus on Black Botanists**

This ongoing series of posts will highlight under-recognized Black scientists whose historically significant research and discoveries in the 19th and 20th centuries contributed to our collective knowledge and understanding of the plant world.

 - **Marie Clark Taylor – Botanist and Educator:**

Find out how to grow cosmos and the other colorful garden annuals that Dr. Taylor, the first Black woman to receive a Ph.D. in science from Fordham University, studied to understand the impact of light on plant development.
 - **Thomas Gaither – Activist and Biologist:**

Behind each collection is the life of the collector, often lost to history. We're excited to celebrate the contributions of Dr. Gaither, both of his fungal collections, and to advancements in the fight for civil rights.
 - **Lafayette Frederick – Fungal Systematist:**

See a type specimen of fungal species described by Dr. Lafayette Frederick, a mycologist who followed in George Washington Carver's footsteps to understand and document all manner of plant pathogens.
 - **Thelma Perry – Mycologist and Teacher:**

Post debuts by February 14

Discover one of the "hidden figures" of groundbreaking fungal research at the USDA Forest Service.
 - **Dr. James Still – "Doctor of the Pines":**

Post debuts by February 14

A brief account of the life and legacy of a 19th-century herbalist.

- **Transatlantic Plant Journeys**

With illustrative images of plant specimens from NYBG's Steere Herbarium, two posts tell the stories of how enslaved Africans brought okra and cowpeas to the Western Hemisphere.

 - Okra's Journey to the United States
 - Cowpeas and the African Diaspora: What Can Natural History Collections Add? *Post debuts by February 21*

- **Medicine, Knowledge, and Power in the Atlantic Slave Trade**

Even as they were brutally forced from their homelands, enslaved Africans brought valuable medical and botanical knowledge with them to the Americas. In this video of her 2021 online lecture, Yale University Professor Carolyn Roberts highlights how African plant expertise was incorporated into 18th-century science and used to sustain the largest forced oceanic migration in human history.

- **Botanical Tour of Harlem**

The New York City neighborhood of Harlem is a center for Black culture in America. Take a virtual tour through Harlem and learn about some of the plant specimens in NYBG's

Steere Herbarium that were collected from the neighborhood, from city sidewalks to northern Central Park.

▪ **Community through Story**

Peruse titles by Black authors on-site in the LuEsther T. Mertz Library and participate in online discussions with the NYBG Beyond Books Club and Bronx Bound Books, a bookstore on wheels.

○ **Mertz Library Book Display**

Tuesday–Friday; 10 a.m.–4 p.m.

Explore titles by Black authors in the LuEsther T. Mertz Library's collection.

○ **Read with Bronx Bound Books**

This month, [NYBG Beyond Books Club](#) on Facebook is thrilled to team up with Bronx Bound Books. Recently featured in *Curbed* and *Time Out New York* and on *Good Morning America*, Bronx native LaTanya DeVaugn has launched this initiative to bring literature to every corner of the Bronx using a bookstore on wheels. For this monthlong “takeover,” LaTanya will feature a few personal favorites.

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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.

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