

# NYBG

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## **The New York Botanical Garden Announces Its Major Exhibition for 2022, *Around the Table: Stories of the Foods We Love***

**Garden-wide Presentation Will Examine the Art and Science of Foodways and Food Traditions and Celebrate Plants as Foundational to All Culinary Customs**

**On View June 4 through September 11, 2022**



Photo caption: *Around the Table* montage, including in lower right: Lina Puerta, *Tomatoes and I (Black)* (detail), 2020

**Bronx, NY**—The New York Botanical Garden (NYBG) today announced that its major, institution-wide exhibition for 2022 will be *Around the Table: Stories of the Foods We Love*. Throughout this multifaceted presentation that examines the art and science of foodways and food traditions, many dating back thousands of years, visitors will explore the rich cultural history of what we eat and learn that—from global dietary staples such as rice, beans, squash, and corn to the regional spice and flavor provided by peppers, greens, and tomatoes—plants are at the base of all culinary customs. Expansive displays of living edible plants, art and science installations, weekend celebrations, and wellness and culinary-themed programming will provide opportunities to discover the diversity and beauty of plants that are grown for cuisine around the world; uncover the botanical origins of the foods people think they know; cultivate deeper understanding of the environmental and social impacts of food choices; and invite gathering at artist-designed tables set throughout NYBG's 250 acres, bringing to life stories about the featured and other notable edible plants. *Around the Table: Stories of the Foods We Love* will be on view June 4 through September 11, 2022.

## Displays of Living Edible Plants at the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory

Showcasing hundreds of varieties of edible plants, including peppers, squash, cabbage, beans, grains, corn, banana, sugarcane, and breadfruit, three installations in and around the Haupt Conservatory will beckon visitors to explore the diversity and beauty of food plants grown around the world.

- In the Conservatory's Seasonal Exhibition Galleries, a wide assortment of edible herbaceous plants and fruit-bearing trees flourishing in containers, entwined in overhead trellises, and reaching skyward from vertical planters ideal for compact urban spaces will inspire appreciation of the plants that nourish us.
- The Conservatory Courtyards will offer an array of familiar and surprising edible plants from across the globe—from dietary staples of Southeast Asia, including rice, taro, and banana, to crops suited to arid regions of Africa, including dates, figs, citrus, and foxtail barley. Peppers and tomatoes, grapes and olives, a gourd trellis, and a spirits garden featuring plants used in the creation of beer, wine, and liquors will round out this diverse display.
- A portion of the Botanical Garden's Conservatory Lawn will be transformed into an undulating field of dwarf sorghum and barley, traditional grains well-suited to NYBG's climate, allowing observation of the sowing, nurturing, harvesting, and replanting processes of these foundational food plants over the course of the exhibition.

## African American Gardens at the Edible Academy

Curated by Dr. Jessica B. Harris, America's leading scholar on the foods of the African Diaspora, ***African American Gardens: Remembrance and Resilience*** celebrates African American food and gardening histories, and the contributions of essential plants to American foodways. Dr. Harris has worked with historians, heritage seed collectors, and NYBG's Edible Academy staff to present a sequence of garden beds that spotlight plants central to African American life and survival in the United States. *African American Gardens* also features a poetry walk curated by Cave Canem Foundation, the premier home for Black poetry, committed to cultivating the artistic and professional growth of African American poets.

## Art and Science Installations Throughout the Garden

**Artist-designed tables** across the Garden's landscape will showcase edible plants from *Around the Table*. NYBG has issued a public call for artists who live or work in the Bronx to submit designs and, if selected, explore the cultural and historical significance of edible plants and plant-based food traditions, bringing to life inspiring stories of community and survival on tables supplied by the Garden that will encourage sitting, sharing, and storytelling.

In the LuEsther T. Mertz Library Building Art Gallery, visitors can examine the social and cultural impacts of the American food system through displayed works by **contemporary artist Lina Puerta**. Puerta celebrates and acknowledges the essential, often invisible, role of farmworkers, the relationship between nature and the human-made, and ancestral knowledge in mixed-media sculptures,

installations, collages, hand-made paper paintings, and wall hangings that incorporate materials ranging from artificial plants and paper pulp to found, personal, and recycled objects.

The Bronx Foodways Oral Histories Project is a multiyear effort to collect, record, and archive personal food narratives from Bronx community gardeners and urban farmers—making them accessible to the public. As part of the *Around the Table* exhibition, **Bronx-based muralist André Trenier** will create murals in highly visible locations around the borough, saluting urban farmers from The Bronx Foodways Oral Histories Project. Reproductions of Trenier's completed murals, as well as oral history videos and photos of Bronx gardens taken by students from the Bronx Documentary Center, will be installed in NYBG's Arthur and Janet Ross Gallery.

Also in the Mertz Library Building, the creativity and ingenuity of plant scientists and plant-based chefs will be exhibited. In a **science and tradition** display in the Britton Science Rotunda and Gallery, visitors will learn about the work of present-day researchers to understand the bioactive compounds in the food people eat, the science of growing food, and the impact that food choices have on the environment. In the Rondina and LoFaro Gallery, **seed catalogs and plant-based cookbooks** reveal the science—and art—of agriculture and cuisine.

An artful, immersive **data visualization installation** created by leading design firm Pentagram will be on view in the Leon Levy Visitor Center Reflecting Pool and will help visitors understand the global impact of food production and consumption on the planet.

### **Bountiful Programming for All Ages**

Visitors to *Around the Table: Stories of the Foods We Love* will enjoy diverse and engaging public programming for all ages. Highlights will include artist-designed table tours, food demonstrations, themed weekend celebrations, and more.

On Saturday, June 18, 10 a.m.–12 p.m., the **symposium, *A Seat at the Table***, will include two compelling sessions exploring how Black farming informs American history and culture in New York City and across the country:

- In “Celebrating the African American Farmer,” Natalie Baszile, author of the 2021 anthology *We Are Each Other's Harvest*, sits down with Dr. Jessica B. Harris, food historian and scholar, for a conversation in Ross Hall. Their wide-ranging dialogue will cover topics from the historical perseverance and resilience of Black farmers and their connection to the American land, to the generations of farmers who continue to farm despite systemic discrimination and land loss.
- “Stories from the Farm,” moderated by farmer, urban gardener, food advocate, activist, and NYBG Trustee Karen Washington, will be a multigenerational panel discussion devoted to stories of Black farmers from many perspectives: North and South, Upstate and the Bronx, sharecroppers to family growers and urban farmers. Participants will give historical and contemporary context for Black farmers' contributions to communities and food justice/sovereignty movements in urban and rural America.

Each week during *Around the Table*, **Wellness Wednesdays** will serve up the NYBG Farmers Market, food demonstrations, and health and wellness activities.

**“It’s All About Food”** at the Edible Academy will offer food demonstrations and tastings, participatory gardening activities, chef events, and food-themed celebration weekends such as Totally Tomatoes throughout the run of the exhibition.

In **“Kids’ Oral Histories,”** guided by Everett Children’s Adventure Garden Explainers, children and their families will tell stories about the foods that are most meaningful to them and enjoy exhibition-related writing, art, and nature-based activities. A story walk will showcase author Tony Hillery’s children’s book *Harlem Grown* (Simon & Schuster/Paula Wiseman Books, 2020), about a community garden started by schoolchildren in an empty lot in Harlem, New York, in 2011 that has grown into a network of gardens throughout the city.

### **About the Exhibition Advisory Committee**

The New York Botanical Garden has invited advisors with expertise in documenting recipes and food histories, edible gardening past and present, food justice and food insecurity, global and local foodways, nutrition, and the visual arts to join a committee currently in formation to participate in the development of *Around the Table: Stories of the Foods We Love*. Members to date include:

- Toby Adams, Gregory Long Director of the Edible Academy, The New York Botanical Garden
- Garrett Broad, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Communications and Media Studies, Fordham University, and author of *More Than Just Food: Food Justice and Community Change* (University of California Press, 2016)
- Ursula Chanse, Director of Bronx Green-Up and Community Horticulture, The New York Botanical Garden
- Von Diaz, documentary producer, author of *Coconuts & Collards: Recipes and Stories from Puerto Rico to the Deep South* (University Press of Florida, 2018), and recipe and essay contributor to *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Bon Appétit*, *Food & Wine*, *Eater*, and *Epicurious*
- Sheryll Durrant, urban farmer, educator, and food justice advocate; Food and Agriculture Coordinator for New Roots Community Farm, and resident manager of Kelly Street Garden in the South Bronx
- Jessica B. Harris, Ph.D., America’s leading expert on the food and foodways of the African Diaspora, author of 12 critically acclaimed cookbooks, and 2020 James Beard Lifetime Achievement Award recipient
- Alex McAlvay, Ph.D., Kate E. Tode Assistant Curator in the Institute of Economic Botany, The New York Botanical Garden
- Lauren Mohn, Ph.D., Visiting Assistant Professor of Environmental Studies, Swarthmore College
- Gary Paul Nabhan, internationally celebrated nature writer, agrarian activist, and ethnobiologist who works to conserve the links between biodiversity and cultural diversity
- Henry Obispo, founder and CEO of Born Juice and ReBORN Farms

- Lina Puerta, mixed-media contemporary artist whose work has been exhibited at the Ford Foundation Gallery, El Museo del Barrio, Wave Hill, and 21c Museum Hotels, and who recently completed an artist residency and exhibition at the Sugar Hill Children's Museum of Art & Storytelling
- Michael Purugganan, Ph.D., Silver Professor of Biology and former Dean of Science at New York University

## 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.

For more information about *Around the Table: Stories of the Foods We Love*, please visit <https://www.nybg.org/event/around-the-table-stories-of-the-foods-we-love/>.

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and A Seat at the Table*

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LUESTHER T. MERTZ CHARITABLE TRUST:

Providing leadership support for year-round programming at NYBG

Exhibitions in the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory are made possible by the Estate of Enid A. Haupt.

Exhibitions in the Arthur and Janet Ross Gallery are made possible by the Arthur and Janet Ross Fund.

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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](http://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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