

# NYBG

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## With Spring in Full Bloom, The New York Botanical Garden Offers a New Season of Leading Experts and Artists in Compelling Lectures and Presentations

A Fascinating Look at Grafting Fruit Trees, a Sneak Preview of a New Motion Picture, a Conversation to Celebrate an Exhibition Opening, and a Symposium about Caribbean Foodways Will Take Place from April through June 2023



Left to right: Sam Van Aken of The Open Orchard project, film actress Sigourney Weaver (Photo © Andrew H. Walker), contemporary artist Ebony G. Patterson (Photo: Frank Ishman), and Jessica B. Harris, Ph.D., America's leading scholar of the foodways of the African Diaspora.

**Bronx, NY**—Spring is in full bloom, and The New York Botanical Garden (NYBG) is ready for the season with a new lineup of engaging and thought-provoking lectures and presentations by leading experts in American fruit tree cultivation and African American foodways, a celebrated film actress and a leading director, and a contemporary artist who is creating a major, site-specific exhibition at NYBG opening in May.

For Earth Day on Saturday, April 22, contemporary artist Sam Van Aken will speak about his citywide project The Open Orchard in NYBG's **2023 Andrew Carnegie Distinguished Lecture**, titled *Re-Orcharding New York*. Launched in 2022, his public orchard on Governors Island contains nearly 250 fruit tree varieties that once grew in and around New York City but disappeared with the rise of industrialized agriculture. Van Aken will highlight the process of returning these lost varieties to sites throughout the city and its environmental benefits.

On Thursday, May 4, NYBG offers **a special sneak preview of the soon-to-be-released motion picture *Master Gardener***, starring Academy Award® nominee and NYBG Trustee Sigourney Weaver. Directed by Academy Award nominee Paul Schrader, the film follows horticulturist Narvel Roth (Joel Edgerton), the meticulous gardener of Gracewood Gardens. This screening will be introduced by Sigourney Weaver and Paul Schrader through an engaging conversation about the film and the pivotal role that gardening plays in this tale of redemption.

To celebrate a major site-specific exhibition by contemporary artist Ebony G. Patterson, NYBG will present **Ebony G. Patterson in Conversation with Thelma Golden** on Thursday, May 25, in advance of the exhibition's public opening on Saturday, May 27. The first artist to embed within the institution for an immersive residency, Patterson is working directly with NYBG's gardens and collections to create spaces that evoke the natural world while simultaneously using beauty as an invitation to confront larger societal questions about race, gender, class, and violence. She will discuss her work with Thelma Golden, the world's premier curator of art of the African Diaspora and Director and Chief Curator of The Studio Museum in Harlem.

In connection with the debut of a garden highlighting the plants and gardening histories essential to Caribbean foodways, the symposium ***African American Garden: The Caribbean Experience*** on Saturday, June 17, will explore food stories of the Caribbean in two compelling sessions that consider history and memory, as well as the culinary journeys of both people and plants. Curated by NYBG Trustee **Jessica B. Harris**, Ph.D., America's leading scholar of the food and foodways of the African Diaspora, *African American Garden: The Caribbean Experience* will open at the Edible Academy on June 17 during the weekend of Juneteenth.

All lectures and presentations will take place in NYBG's Arthur and Janet Ross Lecture Hall. Advance registration is required. The full schedule follows.

**2023 Andrew Carnegie Distinguished Lecture: *Re-Orcharding New York***

*Saturday, April 22, 2023; 11 a.m.–12 p.m.; Arthur and Janet Ross Lecture Hall*

*Garden Member \$35/Non-Member \$39*

Among its many forgotten histories, New York City was the origin of cultivating fruit trees in the U.S. From the indigenous Lenape (Delaware) people growing plum, apple, and cherry trees to the French Huguenots who introduced grafting and other agricultural practices in the 18th century, the city and region have been shaped by waves of migration and those who brought fruit along as a connection to home.

Fascinated by the historical narratives and cultural significance embedded within fruit and their ability to preserve genetic diversity, **Sam Van Aken** will share his citywide project The Open Orchard, a public orchard on Governors Island that launched in 2022 and contains nearly 250 fruit tree varieties that once grew in and around New York City but disappeared with the rise of industrialized agriculture. Van Aken will highlight the process of returning these lost varieties to sites throughout the city and its environmental benefits. He will also highlight additional projects such as his partnership with NYC Parks GreenThumb, which distributes additional trees to local community gardens. *Continuing education units are available.*

- **Sam Van Aken** is a contemporary artist who work uses the techniques of grafting as an artistic medium to create multi-grafted trees that blossom in different tones and bear fruit from summer into fall. He lives in Syracuse, New York, where he is currently an Associate Professor in the School of Art at Syracuse University.

### **Master Gardener. Advance Film Screening**

#### **Introduced by Sigourney Weaver and Paul Schrader**

*Thursday, May 4, 2023; 6–9 p.m.; Arthur and Janet Ross Lecture Hall*

*Garden Member \$35/Non-Member \$39*

The New York Botanical Garden offers a special sneak preview of the soon-to-be-released motion picture *Master Gardener*, starring Academy Award® nominee and NYBG Trustee **Sigourney Weaver**. Directed by Academy Award nominee **Paul Schrader**, the film follows horticulturist Narvel Roth (Joel Edgerton), the meticulous gardener of Gracewood Gardens. This screening will be introduced by Sigourney Weaver and Paul Schrader through an engaging conversation about the film and the pivotal role that gardening plays in this tale of redemption.

- Academy Award-nominated and BAFTA and Golden Globe winning actress **Sigourney Weaver** has created a host of memorable characters, both dramatic and comic, ranging from Ripley in *Alien* to Dian Fossey in *Gorillas in the Mist*. Over the years, she has captivated audiences and won acclaim as one of the most esteemed actresses on both stage and screen. Other film credits include *Working Girl*, *Avatar*, *Ghostbusters*, *The Ice Storm*, and *Death And The Maiden*. Weaver most recently starred in Phyllis Nagy's drama film *Call Jane* alongside Elizabeth Banks, in Maya Forbes and Wallace Wolodarsky's *The Good House* alongside Kevin Kline, and in *Avatar: The Way of Water*. The latter received a "Best Picture" nomination for the Oscars, Golden Globe, and Critics Choice awards.
- Screenwriter and director **Paul Schrader** was born in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and earned his BA from Calvin College, then his MA from UCLA while working as a film critic and writing *Transcendental Style in Film*. He attended the inaugural class at the American Film Institute. He has written or directed over 30 films, including four collaborations with Martin Scorsese. The first, *Taxi Driver*, won the Palme D'Or at Cannes Film Festival. In 1978, he directed his first film, *Blue Collar*. Schrader's film catalog includes *American Gigolo*, *Cat People*, *Mishima* and *Affliction*. In 2019, Schrader was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Original Screenplay for *First Reformed*, which he also directed.

### **Ebony G. Patterson in Conversation with Thelma Golden**

*Thursday, May 25, 2023; 5:30–6:30 p.m.; Arthur and Janet Ross Lecture Hall*

*Garden Member \$35/Non-Member \$39*

This summer The New York Botanical Garden presents a major site-specific exhibition by contemporary artist **Ebony G. Patterson**. The first artist to embed within the institution for an immersive residency, Patterson is working directly with NYBG's gardens and collections to create spaces that evoke the natural world while simultaneously using beauty as an invitation to confront larger societal questions about race, gender, class, and violence. Her exhibition will provoke questions about what is traditionally considered beautiful and what is often cast aside as unwelcoming or threatening, seducing viewers into acknowledging darker truths lurking ominously beneath lushly planted surfaces.

This event will celebrate the opening of the exhibition, on view beginning May 27, through a dynamic conversation between the artist and **Thelma Golden**, the world's premier curator of art of the African Diaspora and Director and Chief Curator of The Studio Museum in Harlem.

- **Ebony G. Patterson** is an award-winning visual artist who works in a range of media to use beauty as a tool to address global injustices. Her work is held in the collections of major art institutions, including the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, The Studio Museum in Harlem, Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, Pérez Art Museum Miami, and National Gallery of Jamaica, among others. Most recently she was awarded the 2023 David C. Driskell Prize by the High Museum of Art in Atlanta.
- **Thelma Golden** is Director and Chief Curator of The Studio Museum in Harlem, the world's leading institution devoted to visual art by artists of African descent. Under her leadership, the Studio Museum has gained increased recognition as a global leader in the exhibition of contemporary art, a center for innovative education, and a cultural anchor in the community. She has received numerous awards, fellowships, and honorary doctorates, and currently serves on the Board of Directors for the Barack Obama Foundation and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

***African American Garden: The Caribbean Experience***

*Saturday, June 17, 2023; 10 a.m.–12 p.m.; Arthur and Janet Ross Lecture Hall*

*Free Event; Advance Registration Required*

Curated by NYBG Trustee **Jessica B. Harris**, Ph.D., *African American Garden: The Caribbean Experience* will highlight the plants and gardening histories that are essential contributions to Caribbean foodways, including those that have been brought by Caribbean immigrants to the United States. This exhibition will open at the Edible Academy on June 17, 2023, the weekend of Juneteenth. As part of the opening, this symposium will explore food stories of the Caribbean in two compelling sessions that consider history and memory, as well as the culinary journeys of both people and plants.

- ***Mangoes, Breadfruit, Callaloo, And Bottle Gourds: Stories Told by Plants of the Caribbean***

*Jamaica Kincaid in Conversation with Dr. Jessica B. Harris*

Award-winning author **Jamaica Kincaid** will sit down with **Dr. Jessica B. Harris** to talk about Caribbean plants and their associated narratives. This wide-ranging dialogue will cover topics such as Kincaid's writings on Caribbean gardens and gardening and the associations certain plants have to culinary traditions first brought to the Caribbean by Africans and Europeans and then carried by immigrants to the United States. The conversation will touch on migration, adaptation, perseverance, and power, as manifested through plants.

- Born in Antigua, **Jamaica Kincaid** is an award-winning Caribbean African American author best known for her evocative portrayals of family relationships, interwoven with themes of colonialism, gender, race, and class. She is also an accomplished gardener who has expanded the scope of garden writing in essays and memoirs, including her 2020 *New Yorker* essay "Disturbances of the Garden" and *My Garden (Book)*. She is a Professor of African American Studies at Harvard.
- **Dr. Jessica B. Harris** is America's leading scholar of the food and foodways of the African Diaspora. Dr. Harris received the James Beard Lifetime Achievement Award in 2020, and

she was named one of *Time* magazine's *100 Most Influential People of 2021*. In the same year, her book *High on the Hog* was adapted into a Netflix series; in 2022, the series won a Peabody and an NAACP Image Award, and it was renewed for a second season. She serves on NYBG's Board of Trustees.

▪ ***Preserving History: The Power of Sugar in the Caribbean and Beyond***  
*Panel Discussion*

In 2023 the entry bed of *African American Garden: The Caribbean Experience* will mimic a cane field to highlight the centrality of sugar to the region. Food historian **Scott Alves Barton**, Ph.D, will moderate a discussion about the history and culture of the Caribbean and the various roles played by sugar in the region—and beyond. Panelists include **Pierre Serrao**, co-founder of the popular Bronx-based culinary collective Ghetto Gastro; **Shannon Mustipher**, cocktail consultant, spirits educator, and author of the award-winning *Tiki: Modern Tropical Cocktails*; and **Maricel Presilla**, Ph.D., an award-winning author, culinary historian, chef, restaurateur, and a widely recognized expert on Latin American cuisine.

For more information, visit NYBG's [Lectures and Symposia Web page](#)

To register, visit [nybg.org/ContEd](https://nybg.org/ContEd) or call 718.817.8720.

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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](https://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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