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***Wonderland: Curious Nature*, Inspired by the Beloved Classics *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass, And What Alice Found There*, Opens at The New York Botanical Garden on May 18**

**All-New, Garden-Wide Exhibition, Featuring a Magnificent Flower Show, Artworks by Contemporary Artists, Fantastical Tea Parties, Engaging Daytime Programs, and Exciting Night Experiences, Runs through October 27, 2024**



White Rabbit, created by Mosaïcultures Internationales de Montréal (NYBG Photo by Marlon Co)

**Bronx, NY**—The New York Botanical Garden (NYBG) presents an all-new, enchanting exhibition, *Wonderland: Curious Nature*, evoking the spirit of exploration and the uncanny, unbelievable, and unfamiliar nature of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. From May 18 through October 27, 2024, visitors of all ages can step into a one-of-a-kind botanical experience that grows curiously and curiously as they embark upon an immersive, Garden-wide journey through settings, sights, and scents inspired by the classic tale and its sequel, *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There*. A magnificent flower show, contemporary art installations, engaging daytime programming, fantastical tea parties, and

exciting night experiences await the curious and adventuresome at heart. Organized by curator and scholar Jennifer R. Gross, in collaboration with NYBG, the exhibition showcases the work of contemporary artists in diverse media, including FoldHaus Art Collective, Carsten Höller, Patrick Jacobs, Andre Kong Studio, Abelardo Morell, Yoko Ono, Beverly Semmes, Alyson Shotz, Agus Putu Suyadnya, and Paula Wilson. Tickets for *Wonderland: Curious Nature* are on sale at <https://www.nybg.org/event/wonderland-curious-nature/>.

Through three seasons, *Wonderland: Curious Nature* at NYBG transcends the confines of traditional exhibitions, seamlessly blending breathtaking floral displays with contemporary art, all set against the backdrop of NYBG's 250-acre landscape, landmark buildings, and lush natural beauty. The Peggy Rockefeller Rose Garden is one of many horticultural highlights, bursting into peak flower in June, with thousands of roses looking their best through September, as if cued by a conductor or commanded by a queen.

Nearly 160 years after its first publication, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and its heroic protagonist remain touchstones for imagination and wonder across generations and around the world. The beloved tale serves as an inspiration for NYBG's exhibition, combining horticulture, contemporary art, and archival objects to evoke the events and settings brought to life in the *Alice* stories, while also examining the scientific, botanical, and cultural context that produced them.

### **Down the Rabbit Hole in and around the Conservatory**

In the Leon Levy Visitor Center, a White Rabbit fashioned entirely out of plants greets visitors. Created by Mosaïcultures Internationales de Montréal (MIM), a Canadian company dedicated to modern interpretations of the art of “mosaiculture,” a blend of sculpture and plant cultivation, the nearly 12-foot-tall rabbit is one of their incredible installations, which have been shown at botanical gardens and attractions in North America, Europe, and Asia.

A horticultural wonderland awaits visitors in the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory and the surrounding area. Featured plants include those found in a traditional English garden alongside plants that are seemingly plucked from the imagination.

The living component of the *Wonderland* exhibition in the Haupt Conservatory represents a journey that begins in a beautiful flower garden and continues through displays of some of the truly wonderful oddities of the plant world—plants that reveal that nature is filled with fantastic life. Visitors meander through a display of the giant tropical water lily *Victoria amazonica* and other aquatic species before entering a manicured landscape with an English double border. The scene evokes the famous water lily house and walled garden at Oxford University, one of the places that inspired the fanciful tales of Alice and the unforgettable characters she encounters. Familiar favorites like larkspur and foxglove are combined with

more uncanny choices such as the Canary Island-endemic *Echium wildpretii*, commonly known as tower-of-jewels.

As the orderly walled garden begins to come undone, visitors find themselves inside a mysterious rabbit hole and emerge to behold giant leaves and miniature plants. This bold garden of colorful wonders features some of the most fetchingly odd plants from NYBG's collections. Devil's tongue from China, giant milkweed from Africa, and *Myrmecodia*, a plant from Australia that serves as a home to colonies of ants, are just some of the many bizarre but beautiful plants featured in this Wonderland Garden.

Outside, on the Conservatory Lawn, the boundaries of botanical art are challenged by more than 100 topiaries in geometric shapes. Nearby, *Shrumen Lumen*, kinetic mushroom sculptures by FoldHaus Art Collective, that dazzled audiences at the Burning Man festival and around the world, change size at random, as if they are breathing. At night, the sculptures' colorful, moving LEDs beckon visitors to linger in this magical dreamscape with the iconic Conservatory dome as a dramatic backdrop.

### **A World of Wonderment throughout the Garden Grounds**

Nature is the original wonderland. The New York Botanical Garden's 250-acre National Historic Landmark landscape invites visitors to find their "inner Alice," as they explore the work by contemporary artists inspired by and reflecting the context of the stories in surprising ways.

Along the edge of the Thain Family Forest, artist Alyson Shotz uses mirrors in a new work commissioned by NYBG, *A World Made of Time*, to invite visitors to engage nature through shifting perspectives created by sunlight and wind. Overlooking the Rockefeller Rose Garden, Japanese artist, performer, and peace activist Yoko Ono's *Play It By Trust* is a game of chess like no other. All the oversized pieces and the large playing board itself are a single color, challenging traditional aspirations for gamesmanship and competition, creating a thought-provoking twist on the centuries-old game that plays a memorable role in *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There*.

Inspired by Alice's uncanny growth spurt that sends her catapulting through the roof of a garden cottage, Britain-based Portuguese architect Andre Kong presents *Homegrown*, his own version of such a home, constructed with bricks made entirely of mycelium, the rootlike, branching network of fungal threads. Ecovative Design, a leading biomaterials company that develops high-performance, environmentally-conscious packaging and building materials using mycelium, worked in partnership with Andre Kong Studio to create the mycelium bricks for Kong's design.

## **Curiouser and Curiouser in the Library Building Art Galleries**

The exhibits in the LuEsther T. Mertz Library Building expand upon the global appeal of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass*, fostering connections to the childlike wonder of the character Alice, who is undeterred in the face of the unfamiliar.

The Victorian period, when *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* was originally published, was one of great excitement and curiosity, as new technologies, scientific breakthroughs, and discoveries revolutionized how people saw the world and understood nature. Through 19th-century publications, objects, and gadgets—and examples of early *Alice* editions—the displays in the exhibition examine the stories through a modern lens by juxtaposing the historical context with the work of contemporary artists. Cuban artist Abelardo Morell's photography brings new life and dimension to the pages of original *Alice* manuscripts. Figures set within garden landscapes are recorded in video and photography by New York-based artist Beverly Semmes, evoking the imaginative horizons available to everyone reading the classic tales.

Additional works on display include a mushroom sculpture by Carsten Höller, the miniature worlds of artist Patrick Jacobs, fantastical and futuristic dreamscapes by emerging Indonesian painter Agus Putu Suyadnya, and the short video, *Sunflower Love*, by video and performance artist Paula Wilson, offering a contemplation of identity through humanity's connection to nature. Selections from NYBG's Mertz Library collections and specimens from the Botanical Garden's William and Lynda Steere Herbarium tell fascinating stories of mind-altering plants, which were of great interest in the Victorian era and continue to be the subjects of cutting-edge scientific research today.

## **Would You Like an Adventure Now? Programming for All Ages**

The multi-seasonal exhibition is complemented by a vibrant offering of public programming. The exhibition starts with an Opening Weekend Garden Party Celebration on Saturday and Sunday, May 18 and 19, 2024, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Daffodil Hill. Dine like royalty as a special guest at the Queen's Tea. Presented by the award-winning theater company We Players, encounter wild and whimsical Wonderland characters at NYBG. Race the White Rabbit, become tongue-tied with the Tweedles, or sit for a springtime chat with Alice herself. Partake of Wonderland-inspired tea and crumpets available for purchase, give croquette or other lawn games a go, and create a hat before joining in a variety of tea sampling demonstrations as the Mad Hatter makes merry on grounds.

A rich array of self-guided tours and other programs provide lively experiences Garden-wide both during the day and at night. On Saturdays, Sundays, and select holiday Mondays, favorite characters such as the Mad Hatter, the Queen of Hearts, and the White Rabbit spring from the page and find a home at NYBG. At the Everett Children's Adventure Garden

Pop-Up, *Wonderland: Wonder Thyme* encourages children to explore the natural world from new perspectives inspired by Alice’s storybook adventures.

Wonderland Nights are a not-to-be-missed evening events for adults 21 and over, on select dates—June 1, 8, and 15, from 7 to 10 p.m., with more dates to be announced in September and October. *Wonderland* comes to life after hours with staged performances and cocktails. In a spectacular show of rhythm and delight, Thistle Dance lets loose during the Mad Hatter’s dance party. A special ticket is required.

Fantastic Fungi Weekend on Saturday and Sunday, September 14 and 15, 2024, bring together creative voices in the worlds of food, healing, design, and the performing arts who are inspired by, or make use of, fungi in their work. Discover the fascinating world of mushrooms through the eyes of scientists, and learn how these unique organisms help make life on Earth possible.

### **Eat This and Drink This—*Wonderland* Dining Options**

Throughout the Botanical Garden, opportunities for themed refreshment abound. Whether looking for a hearty meal, a sweet “unbirthday” treat, a savory nibble, or an inventive handcrafted cocktail, all can find something delightfully mad to spark their curiosity and whet their appetites.

Pine Tree Café, known for its grab-and-go pastries and coffees, serves Alice’s “Drink Me” Lavender Lattes, hot or iced; Queen’s Lemonade inspired by the Queen of Hearts; and themed pastries, including illustrated Wonderland Sugar Cookies and Mad Hatter Chocolate Brownies. Visitors can also fuel their madness with beverages, sandwiches, salads, and wraps.

Hudson Garden Grill—NYBG’s full-service, sit-down restaurant—features an exhibition-themed menu and custom cocktails and mocktails throughout the duration of the exhibit. With a whimsical individual tea service and delectable prix-fixe options, the Hudson Garden Grill is an enchanting extension of the *Wonderland* experience. Finish the meal with a tier stand of sweets.

The Rose Court, a Queen of Hearts-inspired pop-up at the Peggy Rockefeller Rose Garden, with thousands of roses and lush natural beauty, is a jewel box destination nestled in the shade of the Garden’s historic Stone Cottage. Visitors can indulge in the Queen’s berry lemonade, an array of cookies, sweets, and frozen treats such as ice cream sandwiches, complemented by refreshing cold beverages, including an enticing red spiced hibiscus iced tea.

Step through the pages of *Wonderland* into a world of boxwood and vintage looking-glasses at the Looking Glass, a weekend and evening pop-up in the Visitor Center patio, offering delightful Tea-To-Go service, a curated selection of wines, beers, and frosé, cookies, decorated sweets, and kid-friendly fare perfect for *al fresco* dining.

Charm and a bit of cheekiness await at The Unbirthday Truck and Ice Cream Cart. With tea sandwiches and Tea-To-Go service, sweet and savory afternoon and seasonal frozen treats, and *Wonderland* Snack Mix, every day feels like a golden birthday.

For those looking for a Mad Hatter's experience, the Hudson Garden Grill also hosts an enchanting Tea Party Party, by reservation-only on Thursday afternoons from 4:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m., offering visitors the opportunity to bring *Wonderland* to life with individual pots of tea, delectable savory hors d'oeuvres, tea sandwiches, and an array of sweets.

### **Find the Perfect Wonderland Gift at NYBG Shop**

NYBG Shop has a wide array of *Wonderland*-themed products including colorful floral and mushroom images, t-shirts, magnets, mugs, and umbrellas, as well as Alice-inspired jewelry and accessories. Tea aficionados can find an assortment of whimsical ceramic teapots and teacups, serving pieces made from upcycled vintage porcelain, and NYBG's own gourmet tea collection from Tea Forte. For anyone who hasn't yet read the books that inspired the exhibition, they can choose from over 15 different versions of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass, and What Alice Found There* for both children and adults, including a custom designed leather-bound volume that's sure to become a family heirloom. Find a selection of unusual climbing vines, carnivorous plants, curious seeds, and elegant topiaries, as well as kits to grow edible mushrooms at home.

### **About the Guest Curator**

Guest curator Jennifer R. Gross, Ph.D., is an independent curator and art historian. Most recently, she curated a retrospective on artist and poet Mina Loy for Bowdoin College and an exhibition of the work of contemporary artists Ashley Bryan and Paula Wilson for Colby College Museum of Art. The Founding Director of the Hauser & Wirth Institute, a nonprofit supporting research and artist archives, Dr. Gross has also served as Chief Curator at the deCordova Sculpture Park and Museum and the Seymour H. Knox, Jr., Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art at Yale University Art Gallery.

### **About The New York Botanical Garden**

The New York Botanical Garden (NYBG) has been a connective hub among people, plants, and the shared planet since 1891. For more than 130 years, NYBG has been rooted in the cultural fabric of New York City, in the heart of the Bronx, its greenest borough. NYBG has

invited millions of visitors to make the Garden a part of their lives, exploring the joy, beauty, and respite of nature. NYBG's 250 acres are home to renowned exhibitions, immersive botanical experiences, art and music, and events with some of the most influential figures in plant and fungal science, horticulture, and the humanities. NYBG is also a steward of globally significant research collections, from the LuEsther T. Mertz Library collection to the plant and fungal specimens in the William and Lynda Steere Herbarium, the largest such collection in the Western Hemisphere.

The plant people of NYBG—dedicated horticulturists, enthusiastic educators, and scientific adventurers—are committed to helping nature thrive so that humanity can thrive. They believe in their ability to make things better, teaching tens of thousands of kids and families each year about the importance of safeguarding the environment and healthy eating. Expert scientists work across the city, the nation, and the globe to document the plants and fungi of the world—and find actionable, nature-based solutions to the planet's dual climate and biodiversity crises. With eyes always looking forward, they train the next generation of botanists, gardeners, landscape designers, and environmental stewards, ensuring a green future for all. At NYBG, it's nature—or nowhere.

For more information about *Wonderland: Curious Nature*, visit our website at <https://www.nybg.org/event/wonderland-curious-nature/>.

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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)**

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