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NYBG's the *African American Garden | Diaspora: Same Boat Different Stops*, Highlights the Plants and Gardening Traditions at the Heart of the Experiences and Histories of People from Africa in the Americas

Curated by Dr. Jessica B. Harris, America's Leading Scholar of the Foodways of the African Diaspora, the *African American Garden* Opens on June 15, 2024



[Left] The *African American Garden | Diaspora: Same Boat Different Stops* at The New York Botanical Garden (NYBG Photo by Marlon Co). [Right] Jessica B. Harris, Ph.D., America's leading scholar of the foods of the African Diaspora.

Bronx, NY—The New York Botanical Garden (NYBG) opens the *African American Garden | Diaspora: Same Boat Different Stops* on June 15, 2024. Curated by Jessica B. Harris, Ph.D., America's leading scholar of the foods of the African Diaspora, the garden highlights the plants and gardening traditions that are at the heart of the experiences and histories of people from Africa in the Americas. It will be on view through October 2024. The *African American Garden* is made possible with support from the Mellon Foundation.

The Healing of Gardens: A Diasporic Conversation, a symposium presented by NYBG's Humanities Institute with generous support from the Mellon Foundation, precedes the opening of the *African American Garden | Diaspora* on Saturday, June 15, from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. in the Botanical Garden's Arthur and Janet Ross Lecture Hall. Exploring plant and food stories associated with memory and belonging, as well as the culinary journeys of people

and plants, the symposium includes a dialog between Dr. Harris and Camille T. Dungy, award-winning author of *Soil: The Story of a Black Mother's Garden* (Simon & Schuster, 2023). It will touch on landscape, environmental justice, power, and belonging as manifested by our relationship with the soil beneath us.

The symposium will also feature *Views from the Diaspora: A Panel Discussion*, with Adrian Lipscombe, founder of Uptown Café in Wisconsin; Erminia Apolinário, founder of catering business ZKA Brazilian Soul Food; Korsha Wilson, food journalist and host/founder of media company and podcast A Hungry Society; and Von Diaz, an Emmy Award-winning documentarian and food historian. The symposium is free and open to the public; [RSVP here](#).

Now in its third year, the *African American Garden* is a three-year collaboration between scholars and local artists to celebrate the history of the African Diaspora in the Americas through the lens of plants and food, presented at NYBG's Edible Academy, in the Barnsley Beds, a sequence of eight vegetable garden beds arranged in a semi-circle. Starting with an orientation center, some of the beds explore plants from different regions—South America, the Caribbean and Central America, and North America—while others spotlight their uses for medicinal remedies, creativity, and economic value. The final bed is a recreation of a sugarcane field, an important plantation crop throughout the tropical parts of the Americas, driving the forced removal, relocation, and brutal enslavement of millions of Africans.

In 2022, *African American Garden: Remembrance & Resilience* gave a curated view of the diverse world of African Americans and their foodways in the context of the United States from rice, okra, and other grains and greens to cotton, tobacco, indigo, watercress, and licorice root. For 2023, *African American Garden: The Caribbean Experience* featured more than 140 plant varieties highlighting the plants and gardening histories that are essential contributions to Afro-Caribbean foodways, including those that have been brought to the U.S. by Caribbean immigrants.

Dr. Harris, an NYBG Trustee, has written 12 critically acclaimed books on the foods and foodways of the African Diaspora, including *High on the Hog: A Culinary Journey from Africa to America*, and was recently inducted into the James Beard Foundation's Hall of Fame. To create the *African American Garden*, she worked with historians, heritage seed collectors, and NYBG's Edible Academy staff to replant and reinterpret the Barnsley Beds, turning them into a living archive that documents African American food and farming histories, as plants and people travel to new places, including the Bronx.

“Here in these eight beds, you will find stories of resilience and resistance, modification and migration, remembrance, reverence, and hemisphere-wide connection told through the plants of our world,” said Dr. Harris. “The words ‘Same Boat Different Stops’ speak to the

links shared by all of African descent...Over our more than 500 years as inhabitants of this hemisphere, we have with our cultures, labor, and agricultural know-how, transformed it. This garden celebrates our presence here in all of its forms.”

Cave Canem Foundation—the premier home for Black poetry, committed to cultivating the artistic and professional growth of African American poets—has once again curated a Poetry Walk, a selection of works by poets from across the diaspora for the *African American Garden*. Founded by artists for artists, Cave Canem fosters community to enrich the field by facilitating a nurturing space in which to learn, experiment, create, and present.

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.

More information about the *African American Garden | Diaspora: Same Boat Different Stops* is available at <https://www.nybg.org/event/african-american-garden/diaspora-same-boat-different-stops/>.

The African American Garden is made possible with support from the Mellon Foundation.

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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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