

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 21, 2026

The New York Botanical Garden Announces *Before New York*, a New Traveling Pop-up Exhibition Exploring the Ecological History of New York City's Landscape

***Before New York* Will Be on View at NYBG Beginning April 25, and Display at Locations in Each N.Y.C. Borough through Autumn 2026**

Bronx, NY—The New York Botanical Garden (NYBG) has announced the upcoming launch of its new traveling pop-up exhibition, *Before New York*, which will be on view in NYBG's Ross Gallery, beginning on April 25, and running through November 15, 2026. Exploring the historical ecology of the land on which New York City now sits, *Before New York* will be displayed at locations in all five City boroughs, with accompanying special events at each location, concluding in November 2026. *Before New York* will present the region that would become New York City—its natural features, inhabitants, geography, flora, and fauna—as it existed before Henry Hudson's arrival in 1609, and its eventual colonization, as well as how it is has evolved through the present day. For more information, please visit:

<https://www.nybg.org/event/before-new-york-a-traveling-pop-up-exhibition/>

Before New York is based on the comprehensive research of renowned New York City ecologist Dr. Eric W. Sanderson, Vice President of Urban Conservation at NYBG's Center for Conservation and Restoration Ecology. The exhibition will reveal the early sights and sounds of this region's remarkably rich and diverse coastal landscape, illustrated through large-scale photographs, never-before-seen digital renderings, and soundscapes that connect audiences to the ecological history of the place they stand in today.

Before New York will include panoramic images rendered using scientific data tailored to each borough, displaying landmark features, plants, and the landscape as it looked 400 years ago. Present-day photos of the areas will add context to how drastically New York City nature has changed. Data-driven soundscapes—reconstructing historical local sounds, such as bird calls—and websites will represent this region's prehistoric geography and natural environment, in comparison with its modern street grid. The exhibition will also show how different City neighborhoods developed in response to the natural environment and history and highlight efforts happening today to promote a greener, more sustainable future.

“I am immensely excited to bring *Before New York* to New York City,” said Dr. Eric W. Sanderson, researcher and Vice President for Urban Conservation of the New York Botanical Garden. “The natural history of our own backyard has so much to teach us, in the face of grave threats to our Earth and biodiversity and the opportunities we all have to make a difference. It is my hope that this exhibition will bring to life the people, plants, animals,

and landscape who have shaped our city’s past, present, and future—and inspire everyone who sees it to champion the conservation nature into the future.”

In addition to the New York Botanical Garden in the Bronx, *Before New York* will display at locations in each of the five boroughs, concluding November 2026. Details and locations will be announced on nybg.org.

The Garden will host the Opening Lecture for *Before New York* on Tuesday, April 28, 2006, at 11 a.m., in Ross Hall. It will include insights into how Dr. Sanderson and his colleagues spent 25 years reconstructing the features, plants, and landscape of the Bronx as it existed 400 years ago. The lecture is free with Garden grounds access. Visit here to register: <https://www.nybg.org/event/before-new-york-a-traveling-pop-up-exhibition/the-bronx-before-new-york/>

NYBG’s Urban Conservation team will also host special events at each *Before New York* pop-up exhibition location, customized for each borough. Events will include:

- A public lecture by Dr. Eric Sanderson on the historical ecology of the designated New York City borough
- A guided walking tour of the local neighborhood focused on neighborhood restoration
- An artistic program that interprets the borough’s ecological history and restoration efforts through creative practice.

Before New York is informed by Dr. Sanderson’s 2009 book, *Mannahatta: A Natural History of New York* (Abrams) and his pending atlas and gazetteer, *Before New York: The Natural Geography of the City*, to be published November 3, 2026 by Abrams. Dr. Sanderson’s The Welikia Project (welikia.org) grew out of the Mannahatta Project, extending historical ecology studies from Manhattan Island to all five boroughs of New York City. Through writing, lectures (including a TED talk), and [map-driven websites](#), Sanderson’s work seeks to virtually reclaim the natural heritage of the city and integrate it into our shared future.

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.

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Exhibition Funding:

United States Senate Democratic Leader Charles Schumer

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

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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