

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 11, 2026

***Growing America*, Showcasing the Evolution of American Food Plants and Agriculture from Pre-Colonial Times to the Present Day, to Open at the New York Botanical Garden on July 4**

Exhibition Will Feature Displays of Artifacts in the Mertz Library and Edible Plants at the Barnsley Beds, Tracing the History of America's Food Crops and Culture, Ahead of Nation's 250th Anniversary

Bronx, NY—The New York Botanical Garden (NYBG) has announced that it will present *Growing America*, a new exhibition opening July 4 that connects visitors to key moments and themes in America's agricultural and food history, in celebration of the nation's 250th anniversary. With displays indoors in NYBG's LuEsther T. Mertz Library and outdoors at the Barnsley Beds of the Edible Academy, *Growing America* will tell the story of how food crops and agriculture have shaped our landscape and how the American food system has changed and evolved. Through rare historical artifacts in the Mertz Library, including botanical illustrations, planting ledgers, books, and cookbooks, complemented by living plant displays on the Garden's grounds that trace the development of foodways from pre-colonial eras to the present, *Growing America* offers visitors the opportunity to see how our nation's planting and agricultural traditions have grown as America has, in time for the milestone of 250 years since the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

Growing America will run at NYBG from July 4 through October 18, 2026. The Mertz Library exhibit will be on view Tuesdays through Fridays, from 10 a.m. until 5 p.m. The outdoor living plant displays in the Barnsley Beds will be on view Tuesdays through Sundays, from 10 a.m. until 6 p.m.

"*Growing America* reflects the ubiquitous and profound impact of plants, gardening, and agriculture on the development of American life and food culture," said Jennifer Bernstein, CEO and The William C. Steere Sr. President of the New York Botanical Garden. "We are honored to present unique artifacts from our Library archives, alongside objects from the George W. Bush and Barack Obama Presidential Libraries, together with living plant collections to bring this one-of-a-kind perspective to the public and to tell the story of the fundamental connection between plants and American history."

In the Mertz Library, one of the most comprehensive collections in the world dedicated to botany, gardening, and landscape design, visitors can see how America's relationship with cooking and food culture has developed over the centuries. The Mertz Library presentation will span Revolutionary-era New York, wartime Victory Gardens, NYBG's own role in American food culture, and the evolution of cookbooks and domestic food practices. Highlights will include the *NYC Plantsman's Ledger*, 1793–1796, which records plant purchases by early New Yorkers, including Aaron Burr; NYBG's World War II Victory Garden plans and photographs; Alexander Anderson's early experimentation with plant-based food production; and 20th-century cookbooks that reflect the rise of everyday modern technologies, such as refrigeration, supermarkets, frozen foods, and convenience cooking in America.

Through a special collaboration with the George W. Bush Presidential Library and the Barack Obama Presidential Library, part of the National Archives and Records Administration, *Growing America* will also spotlight the role of food plants and gardening on the national stage—exploring food and diplomacy, White House state dinners, and the revitalization of the White House Vegetable Garden.

Elsewhere on NYBG's 250-acre National Historical Landmark site, adjacent to the Edible Academy, visitors can explore a living display of the agricultural history of the United States and see how food has shaped our landscape. Visitors will see Indigenous agricultural innovations and food plants native to the Americas that have informed our modern foodways, such as Flint corn and Nanticoke squash; learn about benne and the Arikara bean, plants the Founding Fathers considered revolutionary; and discover the ways in which traditions and plants, like okra, brought by enslaved people from Africa dramatically influenced how we eat today. The plants displayed will also spotlight modern agricultural practices—and how the research of NYBG scientists is helping to preserve crop diversity and advance a more resilient global food system.

For more information about *Growing America*, please visit:
<https://www.nybg.org/event/growing-america/>

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 nearly 135 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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*This exhibition is made possible in part by the generous support
of the Arthur F. & Alice E. Adams Charitable Foundation.*

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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