

NC STATE UNIVERSITY

Friends of the JC Raulston Arboretum

Newsletter

Summer 2025 – Vol. 28, No. 1



Greetings from the JC Raulston Arboretum

By Mark Weathington
Director

For a recent Department of Horticultural Science review by NC State's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Extension faculty compiled a report of all the outreach and education opportunities that their programs had put on during 2024. The JC Raulston Arboretum accounted for 44% of that programming with 262 formal educational opportunities. That outreach, whether it is for youth or industry professionals, is at the heart of what we at the JCRA do every day. Those big numbers don't even begin to take into account the education we impart through one-on-one interactions throughout the week whether it is a visitor learning from Tim in the garden, a homeowner calling to pick Greg's brain, or even a potential bride and groom learning about the garden from Amanda and her team.

We continue to look for ways to engage and enlighten and hopefully excite our visitors, so make sure to stop by often to see what we are experimenting with in the garden. Under our newly minted Director of Education and Public Engagement, Elizabeth Overcash, you can expect to see us exploring innovative ways to reach everyone who enters our gates and share our passion and knowledge with them. The collaboration between the education and horticulture teams has never been stronger and the combined experience and know-how produces so many great ideas that the hard part is narrowing our options down to a manageable amount.



Dr. Barb Fair teaches a NC State class in the JCRA's Color Trials.

Friends of the JC Raulston Arboretum Newsletter

Summer 2025 – Vol. 28, No. 1
Editors: Elizabeth Overcash and Blake Wentley
Special thanks to our reader: Kathy Field

Photographs by Amy Beitzel, Paul Field, Kevin Foster, Carol Lawrence, Michael Maier, NC State University Communications, Elizabeth Overcash, Aylcia Thornton, unknown, Mark Weathington, Blake Wentley, Dawn Willis

© July 2025 JC Raulston Arboretum

JC Raulston Arboretum

NC State University 4415 Beryl Road
Campus Box 7522 Raleigh, NC 27606-1457
Raleigh, NC 27695-7522

Phone: 919-515-3132
Fax: 919-515-5361

jcra.ncsu.edu
facebook.com/jcraulstonarboretum/
youtube.com/jcraulstonarb/
instagram.com/jcraulstonarboretum/

Staff

Mark Weathington, Director
Tim Alderton, Research Technician
Amy Beitzel, Development Assistant
Tiffany Brocco, Education Assistant
Joy Burns, School Program Coordinator
Dennis Carey, Curator
Bernadette Clark, Bedding Plant Trials Coordinator
Kathy Field, Business Services Coordinator
Sophia McCusker, Nursery and Research Technician
Elizabeth Overcash, Director of Education & Public Engagement
Greg Paige, Director of Horticulture
Amanda Pattillo-Lunt, Rental Coordinator
Luke Rangel, Rentals Assistant
Aylcia Thornton, Director of Philanthropy
Evan Villani, Research Technician
Kathryn Wall, Membership and Volunteer Manager
Blake Wentley, Education Assistant

Board of Advisors

Heather Rollins, Chair
Sylvia Blankenship, Ph.D., Vice Chair
Rob Thornton, Past Chair

Jeanne Andrus
Robert Bartlett, Jr.
Cyndy Cromwell
Dale Deppe
Cindy Green, Ph.D.
Marilyn Grolitzer, Ph.D.
Sandy Harwood
David Hoffman
Ruth Holcomb
Mike Hudson
Ashley Troth
Garden Club of
North Carolina
Representative

Frank Louws, Ph.D., Ex-officio
Tom Skolnicki, Ex-officio
Aylcia Thornton, Manager

Cover: *Magnolia grandiflora* 'Emerald Spire' by Blake Wentley

Magnolia grandiflora 'Emerald Spire' is tucked all the way in the very back of our magnolia collection. When the flower first opens, the tepals splay wide open to reveal a gynoeceum with fully receptive stigmas, while the stamens hold tight until the following day to prevent self-pollination. The tepals will also open and close repeatedly throughout the day, a neat little detail for aficionados of "the slowest of the performing arts."

NC State University promotes equal opportunity and prohibits discrimination and harassment based upon one's race; color; religion (including belief and non-belief); sex, including but not limited to pregnancy, childbirth, or other related medical condition, parenting, and sexual harassment; sexual orientation; actual or perceived gender identity; age; national origin; disability; veteran status; or genetic information.

2024 Annual Report Numbers & Facts

MEDIA MENTIONS



EXTERNAL SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

- 2/8/24 **Gardener's Conference, Davidson Co. Master Gardeners**, "Slave to the goddess Flora; Plants and Plans from a Lazy Gardener"
- 3/7/24 **Wake County Master Gardeners**, "Lawn Alternatives"
- 3/15/24 **Shenandoah Valley Plant Symposium**, "Slave to Goddess Flora: Gardening is Easy"; "Eating Iguana and Tangling with Typhoons: Tales and Travails of a Plant Explorer"
- 3/19/24 **Georgia Perennial Plant Association**, "New Woodies for Discriminating Gardeners"
- 6/20/24 **Maryland Gardening Conference**, "Re-Thinking the Invasive Conundrum"
- 7/19/24 **Swarthmore Woody Plant Conference**, "Re-Thinking the Invasive Conundrum"
- 9/16/24 **High Point University**, "Wild Germplasm Collection and Conservation"
- 9/18/24 **Cape Fear Botanic Garden**, "Gardening in the South"
- 12/12/24 **Morris Arboretum**, "A Conversation About Natives and Exotics"

INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL

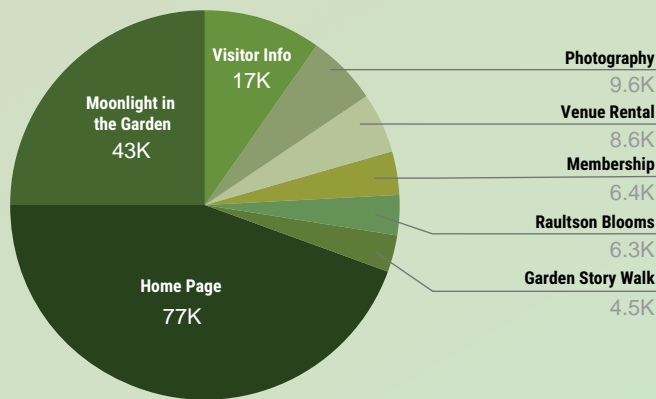
- 1/17 - 29 Travel with the JCRA to **Cambodia & Vietnam**; 50 guests
- 3/26 - 4/6 Plant collecting in **Uruguay**
- 4/19 - 22 **Japan** for ISHS Woody Ornamentals for the Temperate Zone symposium
- 5/18 - 29 **Japan** nursery plant buying trip

HORTICULTURE

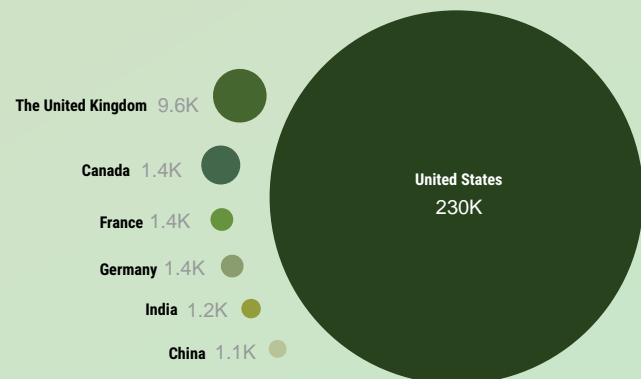
- As of January 10, 2025 there were **9,653** unique taxa in the living collection (unique name + collection number).
- **1,738** new accessions for the year 2024.
- In 2024 we distributed **18,673** plants and seeds - sales, auctions, giveaways, individual distributions.
- 2024 Color Trials - approximately **20%** of the plants in the trials were either sampled or completely eaten by the resident rabbit population. Their favorites were scaevolias (fan-flower) and broccoli!
- The Plant Stand sold **3,800** plants in 2024.

THE WEBSITE

2024 Google Analytics :
258,475 people visited the website (active users)
Most visited pages:



Top countries visiting our website (258K visits total):



VIDEOS/YOUTUBE STATS

- Total videos added - **172** (includes unlisted class recordings).
- Videos published (public videos) - **88**.
- Total views - **222,328** (37% more than 2023).
- Total watch time - **45,155.3** hours (Which is **1,881.5** days or **5.15** years).
- Total subscribers (as of 12/31/24) - **8,843** (We're up to 9,682 now).
- New subscribers - **1,648** (34% more than 2023).

Top video for 2024 - Greg's "Plant-lover's Tour - 'Tall Narrow Trees'" - **5,012** views



Midweek Program:

- U.S. states represented in Midweek viewership: **36**
- Countries represented in Midweek viewership: **5** (Belgium, Canada, Great Britain, Netherlands, U.S.)
- Average live attendance: **102**
- Unique live viewers (2024): **1,059**
- Average rating (out of 5): **4.5**

DEVELOPMENT METRICS

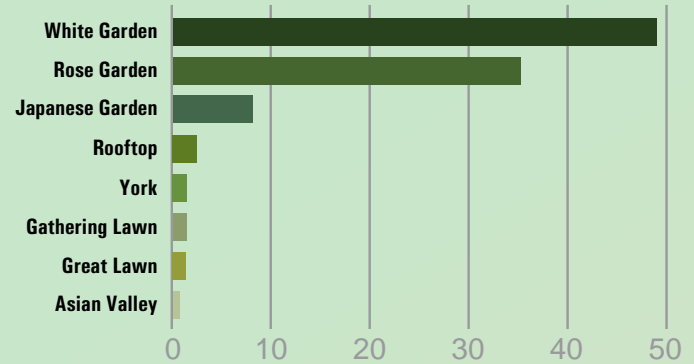
- Day of Giving 2024 - We beat our goal of 250 gifts, hitting **287** donations worth **\$103,228** for our general operating fund.
 - **\$50,000** endowment for art in the garden was established.
 - **\$250,000** gift for an education initiative was pledged.
 - **\$1.5** million planned gift was signed.
 - **\$1** million planned gift for Juniper Level Botanic Garden was documented.
- **93** gifts raising **\$59,681** in support of JCRA Wishlist Projects.
- **9** student summer interns – largest cohort ever – thanks to donor support.

EDUCATION

- Classes, workshops and symposia - **58**
- Participants - **2011**
- New course offerings - **15**
- Lecture recordings shared - **54**
- Baked goods brought to Bryce’s classes - **68** (a very conservative estimation)
- **423+** Yeti sightings!
- **16** classes for **83** homeschool students (This actually surprised us! We didn’t realize we had offered so many classes.)
 - Calendar of Firsts (1 class)
 - Beatrix Potter (4 classes)
 - Windowsill Gardening (2 classes)
 - EcoExplore: Birds! (1 class)
 - Garden Science (4 classes)
 - Naturally Creative (4 classes)
- **22** Garden Storytimes or Story Walks presented for preschoolers.
- **712** Second graders found a Japanese maple tree in the garden (and received a button to prove it)!
- **1,216** marigolds were dissected by Third graders on a school field trip to learn about plants and soil!
- **359** First graders visited to learn about living things, recycling & composting.
- **154** Kindergarteners used their five senses to enjoy the garden.
- **135** High School students were presented with horticultural career information via private tours and a career day event.
- **5** different Y-Guide & Girl Scout Programs.
- **16** custom tours were provided for **321** students, summer campers or homeschool students.
- **??** garden gnomes were hunted down during “Take a Child Outside Week” in September.
- **35** kids took home **175** custom-made holiday decorations created from items found in the garden.

RENTALS

Weddings! There were **102** "I Dos"



There were **146** spaces rented for weddings. And, we had **30** receptions held in York Auditorium.

Other events hosted in 2024:

- **180** meetings
- **15** classes
- **10** graduations
- **9** baby showers
- **8** celebrations of life
- **7** engagement celebrations or proposals
- **1** square dance tour stop
- **1** public orchid show
- **1** 50th anniversary
- **1** 38th family reunion
- and a partridge in a pear tree ;)

EVENTS

Moonlight in the Garden:

- **11,485** advance tickets sold.
- **455** gallons of cider served (enough to fill 2.5 hot tubs).
- **193** lbs of marshmallows roasted or **11,673** marshmallows (the weight of an adult seal!).
- **39** states represented and after NC, Florida had the most attendees at **72**.
- **6** beautiful nights, and **1** very rainy night.

Raulston Blooms:

- **1,739** people attended.
- **2,327** plants sold.
- Net revenue of funds = **1** full-time horticulturist.

MEMBERSHIP

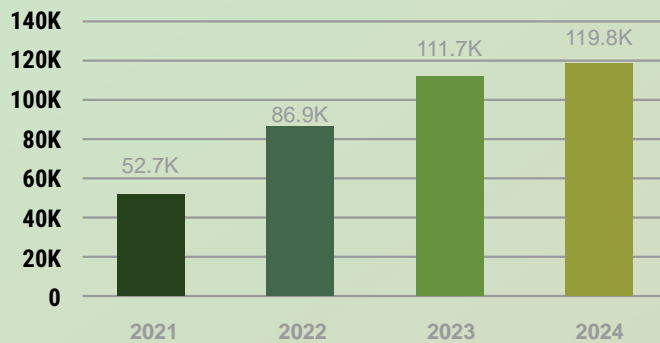
- Total Members (2024): **4,620**
- Our Community Reaches: **25 U.S. states, D.C. and Belgium.**
- Growing Explorer Level: **114** members in the newest member category, which was launched two years ago.
- Celebrating Loyalty: **266** households have 20+ years of membership, representing **6,540** years of dedicated support.
- Average Member Tenure: **7+** years.

VOLUNTEERS

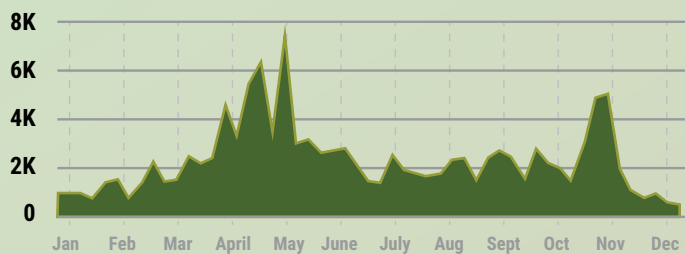
- Our mission was powered by **301** volunteers contributing **12,852** hours in 2024.
- Equivalent to **6** full-time employees!
- Thank you for your donated time, valued at over **\$424,000** (based on \$33.01/hour, independentsector.org).

VISITATION

Visitor Numbers*



Visitor Numbers Throughout 2024*



*Data provided by The Institute for Transportation Research and Education (ITRE) at NC State University

INDEX SEMINUM

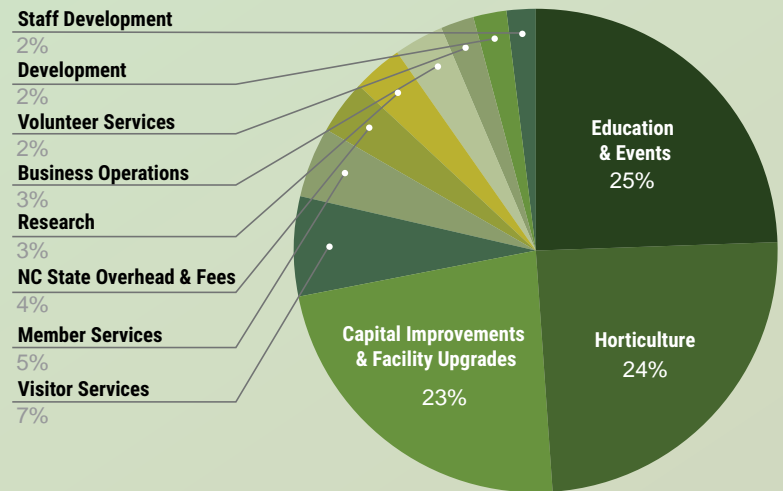
- **107** botanic gardens ordered from the joint JCRA/JLBG Index Seminum seed list in 2024.
- **290** taxa were offered.
- **22** different recipient countries (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, New Zealand, Palestine, Poland, Romania, Spain, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Ukraine, United Kingdom, United States).
- **25** different recipient U.S. states (AL, CA, CT, DE, FL, GA, HI, IL, LA, MA, MI, MO, NC, NJ, NV, NY, OH, OK, OR, PA, SC, TN, TX, WA, WI).

MEMBER SEED DISTRIBUTION

- **636** people participated.
- **3,175** packets of seeds sent out.
- **261** taxa offered.

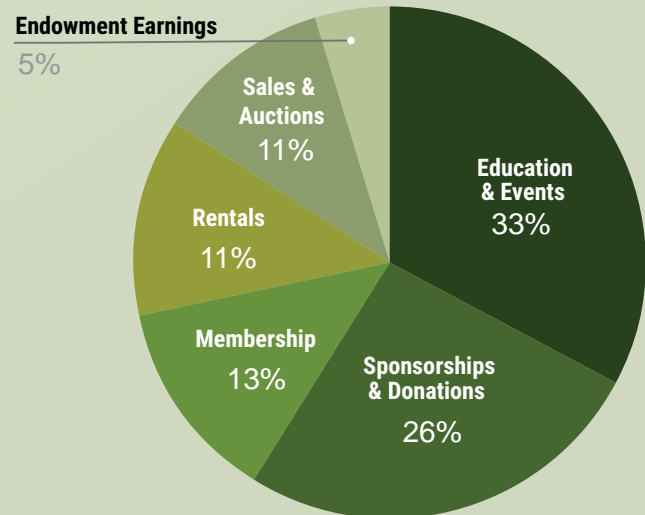
EXPENSES FY2024

\$1,989,065 Total



REVENUE FY2024

\$2,087,141 Total





Berming It Up

By Mark Weathington
Director

It was a while coming, but the Beryl Berms in our northeast quadrant have now reached a milestone — their first birthday, and it has

been interesting to see how they fared through their first winter. More than a few of the plants installed were ones that we had our reservations about regarding their hardiness and consequently had lingered in the nursery too long.

The berms were originally suggested by our design committee as a way to block some of the sound from Beryl Road and the railway, create a garden experience quite different from the rest of the garden and provide enticing views for passing drivers. The Horticulture Team and I liked the idea because of the variety of planting opportunities it would afford us — from damp seeps where we funnel rainwater to bright slopes and dry ridge tops.

Based on his experience in Charlotte, the berm project was a perfect fit for Greg Paige's first undertaking when he started as Director of Horticulture. We knew that added drainage and airflow when planting on slopes led to successes with plants that we typically struggle to keep alive. Berms were the way to try some new things. So in keeping with the Master Plan, we made the tough choice to remove almost all the plants in this section of the garden and berm it up.

There are currently about 180 plants in the new garden area, most of which are trees and shrubs. Smaller understory and herbaceous material will be added as the trees settle in. Quite a few of these original plantings come from recent JCRA plant expeditions like a white-fruited form of evergreen dogwood, *Cornus hongkongensis*, which apparently is much prized for its edible fruit



Magnolia ernestii subsp. *szechuanica* flourishing on a ridge in the Beryl Berms.

in China. Hopefully our plant will flower and fruit now that it is outside, and we can see if it is as tasteless as most other forms we've tried.

We're also looking forward to assessing the performance of some rare plants we've acquired from our travels and our colleagues. I'm particularly interested in *Embelia vestita*, an obscure plant we collected in China thinking at first it might be a holly thanks to its bright red fruits and glossy leaves. Greg's love for magnolias means he's looking especially at the evergreen *Magnolia ernestii* subsp. *szechuanica*, a collection from a 2012 trip to Mt. Emei, and *M. macclurei*, a gift from our friend David Creech that has incredibly glossy and large leaves. All of these plants are settling in nicely, and hopefully we'll start to see some flowers next year.

The drainage and air circulation afforded by the slope of the berms is ideal for growing conifers as well, so we've planted *Callitris rhomboidea* — an Australian species I have killed many times before — and quite a few selections of pine and spruce. We're also hoping these conditions will finally allow for some success with the blue-foliaged Afghan redbud, *Cercis griffithii*, particularly since most of what we've seen grown from commercial sources appear to be hybrids, while our seed-grown plant appears to be correct.

While the slopes and berms were the goal, the resulting low areas are now home to some of the many crinum lilies (*Crinum* spp.) and spider lilies (*Hymenocallis*) we helped Juniper Level Botanic Garden rescue from a collection which otherwise would have been lost.

Greg's goal in plant selection was to provide year-round interest and utilize the berms to push the limits on the plants we can grow. Keep your eye on this space as we add new plants and see whether they flourish or flounder. As J. C. once said, "If you aren't killing plants, you're not pushing yourself as a gardener."



Evergreen dogwood, *Cornus hongkongensis* with immature fruits.



Leaves of our *Cercis griffithii* planted in the Berms.



A showstopper in wet area of Beryl Berms, *Sambucus canadensis* 'Blonde Envy.'



Bright red blooms of *Hibiscus ferrugineus*.



The Midweek Program's Wood Anniversary

By Blake Wentley
Education Assistant
aka Midweek Host

The beginning of April marked an exciting milestone for the JC Raulston Arboretum – 5 years of our Midweek Program!

Midweek with Mark started back in April of 2020 at the beginning of the pandemic. With the world on lockdown and our gates closed, a free, online program offered us the perfect venue to check in with our members and share our passion for plants, even when we were cooped up indoors.

Every week, our director Mark would give a PowerPoint presentation from his office live over Zoom; the video quality was low, there were no live plant samples, and every once in a while, the scrunched-up face of an attendee who just sneezed would pop up on screen, Zoom being certain they had something important to say.

Of course, the realities of putting on an hour-long program every single week started to chip away at Mark's sanity – the effects of which are still obvious today (I mean, aucubas, Mark? Really??). So, we expanded the scope of the program to include our entire horticulture staff which gave us the opportunity to share even more knowledge, experience and wisdom.

When the pandemic was ending and in-person programs became possible again, we realized what an incredible platform our online programming had become for extending the reach of our mission to a broader audience. So, we picked up an external camera and a Wi-Fi hotspot, and moved Midweek out into the garden where we could continue to show off our plants and our beautiful arboretum week after week.

Over the years, we've maintained a dedicated audience of live viewers (who join us from all across the country, and even overseas), and we've even developed a substantial YouTube following, slowly but surely approaching the 10k subscriber mark. Our staff may be chockablock with internet celebrities now thanks to this little endeavor, but really, we're just grateful to have this opportunity to share our passion for plants and horticulture with everyone as we strive to make the world a more beautiful place.



Screenshot of the Zoom room from April 29, 2020 Midweek with Mark.



The Midweek Program filming on the A. E. Finley Foundation Rooftop Terrace



Day of Giving 2025: A Blooming Success!

By Amy Betzel
Development Assistant

Thanks to everyone who participated in the JC Raulston Arboretum's Day of Giving on March 26, 2025, we shattered our goal

of 287 donations with a whopping 340 gifts throughout the day. This dedicated support helps fuel everything we do, supporting our gardens, student internships, education programs and much more.

Every gift mattered. Together, we raised more than \$322,000 in a single day to advance our mission of education, conservation and inspiration. Some special gifts included 79 heartfelt gifts totaling \$3,545 honoring former Associate Director Arlene Calhoun's retirement milestone. We also had five thoughtful donors record estate plan gifts, securing a bright future for both the JC Raulston Arboretum and Juniper Level Botanic Garden. The icing on the cake was a \$500 bonus gift from the University. Our Director of Education and Public Outreach, Elizabeth Overcash, earned it by winning the throwback social media challenge with a cap-and-gown photo from her graduation featuring former interim arboretum director Bryce Lane. Talk about a legacy worth celebrating!

The JC Raulston Board of Advisors' matching challenge continued to inspire wide participation. This year's success built on years of momentum. Since the JC Raulston Board of Advisors launched its Day of Giving challenge in 2021, community participation has skyrocketed. Over six years, JCRA supporters have made 1,085 Day of Giving gifts, raising \$1,065,242 to support the arboretum. This support has transformed student opportunities, expanding our summer internship program from four interns in 2020 to nine in 2024, and has led to the hiring of our second former intern as a full-time staff member.

We are deeply grateful to every person who participated in the Day of Giving and to this vibrant community that continues to support our work throughout the year. Your generosity keeps our gates open, gardens growing and opportunities blossoming.

These opportunities help us fulfill our mission: to diversify the landscape by sharing our passion, our plants, and our knowledge to plan — and plant for a better world. You've helped us grow more than just plants — you've helped grow possibilities. Thanks for helping us bloom together, from all the JCRA staff, plus Kathy Field (missing from the photo above).



Tim and Sophia on air for "You Can Grow THAT in a Container?"



Dual monitors for Kathryn as she manned the chat on Zoom and YouTube!

An Unforgettable Evening Celebrating a Historic Honor

By Mark Weathington and Amy Beitzel
Director and Development Assistant

On May 14, 2025, 60 friends and colleagues gathered at the JC Raulston Arboretum

for a joyful celebration in honor of Tony Avent, world-renowned plantsman and owner of Plant Delights Nursery and Juniper Level Botanic Garden. The occasion? Tony's receipt of the prestigious Veitch Memorial Medal – an international honor awarded by the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) to individuals who have made exceptional contributions to horticultural science. Tony is only the 37th American to receive the medal in its 144-year history and the first North Carolinian.

There are some names in horticulture that, while perhaps not recognized broadly, are well-known to those of us plugged into the horticultural world. Veitch Nurseries was a multi-generational business that brought a wide range of exotic plant material to market during the 19th century. By some estimates, they introduced over 1,200 new species and cultivars to commerce. The Veitch Memorial Medal was introduced to honor James Veitch, Jr. after his passing in 1869.

The list of awardees is a who's who of horticulture from 30 different countries with the lion's share coming from the U.K. More than a few awardees have ties to the JCRA including John Creech, who collected and sent the arboretum the Japanese crepe myrtles (*Lagerstroemia fauriei*) that gave rise to 'Fantasy' and 'Townhouse'. Arboretum friends Koen Camelbeke, Bledwyn and Sue Wynn-Jones, Bill McNamara and Dan Hinkley have all also been honored.

Inspired by Dr. J. C. Raulston himself, Tony built one of the best collections of plants in the world, developed a sophisticated breeding and research program and inspired tens of thousands of gardeners through his deep knowledge and humor. Undoubtedly, this is why he was awarded the Veitch Medal.

A garden gathering to remember

Guests began the evening catching up with old friends and past colleagues over drinks and appetizers in the York Auditorium, followed by a plated dinner and an exclusive plant auction. The evening's entertainment featured heartfelt and humorous remarks from fellow Veitch Medal recipient, Dan Hinkley, as well as current Director of the US National Arboretum, Richard Olsen, former JCRA Assistant Director, Todd Lasseigne, and other friends of the gardens. Tony Avent closed the evening reflecting on his lifelong work in plant exploration, propagation and public education. It was a wonderful evening celebrating not just the international achievement bestowed upon a horticulture giant, but his impact on this close-knit community of plant nerds.

Help grow a future rooted in discovery

This celebration wasn't just about honoring Tony – it also helped fuel his vision of creating an endowment that would support and maintain the Juniper Level Botanic Garden into the future. His generosity in naming the JCRA as the ultimate recipient of the plant collections at the JLBG will allow his legacy to continue long into the future. Thanks to generous supporters and guests, we raised funds for the Tony and Anita Avent Endowment for Juniper Botanic Garden at JC Raulston Arboretum.



Tony Avent receiving the Veitch Memorial Medal in London, England.

Garden Aglow: Moonlight Returns!

By Amanda Pattillo-Lunt
Rental Coordinator

Relive the Magic! Let's take a look at the success of 2024's Moonlight in the Garden and check out some changes for 2025.

What a truly enchanting experience Moonlight in the Garden 2024 turned out to be. The shining lights, crackling fire pits and spectacular views created memories that will last long after the final s'more was roasted. Thanks to your incredible support, this past year's event was a resounding success!

Check out our amazing impact:

- **11,649** tickets were sold, bringing our wonderful community together under the stars.
- **\$379,483** was raised, contributing directly to JC Raulston Arboretum operations and allowing us to continue to offer amazing programs and services to the community.
- **193** pounds of marshmallows were consumed. That's a lot of gooey goodness!
- **455** gallons of cider were heated and enjoyed. Cheers to that!

None of that would have been possible without the tireless efforts of the many individuals who made this annual fundraiser a success. From John Garner and his amazing team at Southern Lights of Raleigh to the JCRA volunteers and the hundreds of volunteer hours dedicated to the event's success.

Get ready to mark your calendars! This year, 2025, marks the ninth anniversary of Moonlight in the Garden. Adding an extra layer of blossoming beauty to the festivities this year, we are thrilled to announce a special partnership with the Raleigh Garden Club as they celebrate their momentous 100th anniversary. Prepare to be captivated by a stunning floral exhibit inside



Enjoying a Moonlight night around the firepits.

York Auditorium showcasing the floral design talents of the Raleigh Garden Club. You won't want to miss it!

We can't wait for another year of delicious food trucks, fantastic bands, melty marshmallows, and the breathtaking lighting that transforms the garden. Tickets drop in September, and JCRA Members get first dibs. Stay in the know (read your eUpdates and JCRA emails!) to hear when tickets go on sale because Preview Night and Anytime Tickets go fast!



Shadow Dancers on the McSwain patio.



The Changing of the Green

By Elizabeth Overcash
Director of Education
and Public Engagement

You say, "Goodbye" and I say, "Hello." A famous line from the Beatles, but also what our spring has been like here at the JCRA. Our staffing has resembled our plant collection recently, where we have

had to say goodbye to some but also welcomed new faces to our staff list.

When Arlene Calhoun first came to the JCRA, she was a volunteer in our visitor center and helped with special projects. It only took a year before Arlene became a full-time member of the staff as the volunteer and membership coordinator in March of 2014. Sometime between October and November of 2015, she transitioned into the role of Assistant Director, and in true arboretum fashion, we failed to make any historical documentation other than the changing of her title from one month's eUpdate to the next. What is documented through newsletters and eUpdates and countless stories from staff, members, volunteers and others is the impact that Arlene had on all of us. Her leadership, business acumen and genuine love for the JCRA is seen through events like Moonlight in the Garden, the rentals and event team that she built who are breaking records each month, the strategy talks and implementation in our education programs and membership growth. It was hard to say good-bye, but we are still benefiting each day from the lingering effects of Arlene's time and talent.

When we celebrated her retirement at the end of March 2025, Arlene was surrounded by members, volunteers as well as former staff and students who worked with her. We filled the York Auditorium with good memories and shared stories before Mark thanked Arlene for all that she had contributed to the JCRA. Arlene was given a planter filled with plants from the JCRA arranged by Tim, a brick to be inscribed in her honor and placed in the brick circle in the parking lot, a lifelong JCRA membership as well as well wishes

and advice from guests. Even though she's retired, we are confident we will see her back strolling the gardens and maybe even roasting a marshmallow at Moonlight this fall.

While we were saying goodbye to Arlene, the Education Team was still onboarding a new member, Tiffany Brocco. Tiffany started in March 2025 and jumped straight into the spring school tour season. Tiffany is an education assistant whose focus will be weekend education programming.



Tiffany leading an activity with middle school students.

We have long known that the JCRA is a destination every day of the week and especially active on the weekends. While we have some education programs on the weekends, we haven't had a large presence out in the garden connecting with our weekend visitors. Tiffany hopes to change that by offering educational opportunities that visitors can happen upon while they are visiting the garden rather than register for in advance. This type of programming will help us connect with these visitors



Evan getting right to work.

so we can share our passion and knowledge with them. We hope that her work will help more people know who we are and why the JCRA's gardens are so special.

When the school year ended in May, we added another new-ish face, Evan Villani. Many of you may recognize Evan from past eUpdates – he was our summer horticulture intern in 2023 and continued working with us while finishing school. He most recently stepped in to help keep the nursery running smoothly while Sophia was out on maternity leave. Greg has been wanting to add to the Horticulture Team and Evan was a great fit. His energy and passion for the garden are contagious. One of his first garden projects was renovating the old butterfly garden near the Great Lawn. The fresh look includes many of the plants that Mark collected while in Uruguay last year. And, yes – do not worry about the butterflies. As Mark says, the entire garden is a pollinator garden and the butterflies were already using all of the garden, not just this one space. Evan has also already jumped into the lineup for the Midweek Program, and he's working alongside Tim and Sophia this summer mentoring this year's group of interns.

Oh, and I'll document my title change for history's sake in the newsletter! At the beginning of May, Mark named me the Director of Education and Public Engagement. The title of director comes with big dreams and a great team to work with. We are challenging ourselves to keep sharing our passion and knowledge, so I hope you'll join us on the adventure. Now channeling the Beatles as they end their song and we move into the next phase – "Hela, heba helloa, woo-hoo!"

Welcome to our 2025 Summer Interns!

Lukas Stanton, horticulture intern, is studying his degree in horticulture at NC State with a concentration in landscape design. He's an aspiring horticultural entrepreneur!

Ruby Waibel, education intern, is an aspiring environmentalist who just finished her associates degree at Wake Tech and is transferring into NC State to study Environmental Science.

Alyssa Green is one of two education interns this summer and a rising senior studying elementary education at NC State.

Emily Sierra-Uriostegui, horticulture intern, is a rising senior majoring in Plant Science at University of Mount Olive with a passion for plant pathology.

Emma Coogan, horticulture intern, is a first year masters student at NC State who graduated with her bachelor degree in horticultural science with a concentration in landscape design.

Morgan Benson, horticulture intern, is a rising senior studying horticulture at NC State with a concentration in production and entrepreneurship with a passion for public horticulture.



2025 Summer Interns (front row) Ruby Waibel and Emily Sierra-Uriostegui. (back row) Lukas Stanton, Alyssa Green, Emma Coogan, Morgan Benson.



Kevin Foster (above) is the nonprofit administration intern and a rising senior at NC State studying graphic and experience design.



‘Plan and plant for a better world.’ Mission of landscape diversity, interesting plants and sharing that with the Green Industry...



Sharing Our Expertise, Growing Our Impact

By Kathryn Wall
Membership and
Volunteer Manager

At the JC Raulston Arboretum, we don't just grow plants — we cultivate connections, knowledge and leadership that extend far beyond our garden gates. Our staff plays

active roles in organizations dedicated to advancing horticulture, public gardens and plant science. By sharing our expertise and engaging with peers across the country and around the world, we help shape the future of public horticulture.

As part of the American Public Gardens Association (APGA), several of our team members contribute to national leadership and collaboration efforts. For the past four years, I've served as community chair for the College & University Gardens Community, facilitating connections and sharing best practices among botanical gardens of all sizes that are affiliated with higher education institutions. We have such a wonderful volunteer program here at the JCRA that I was asked to be a panelist for a spring webinar on how the JCRA engages volunteers in guest service roles. This summer, I will be leading a session at the APGA Volunteer Engagement and Guest Services Symposium in Philadelphia, PA.

My topic is “Mental Health First Aid Intro: Supporting Volunteers and Visitors (and Co-workers!),” reflecting a growing focus on mental wellness in public-facing roles which also happens to be a topic that is meaningful to me.

Greg Paige, our director of horticulture, participates in APGA's Plant Collection Network which plays a crucial role in shaping best practices for managing and conserving plant collections. His efforts ensure that JCRA's expertise contributes to national advancements in collection stewardship, strengthening collaboration across public gardens. Through his work, the JCRA continues to be a key player in the future of plant curation, conservation and utilization.

Greg and JCRA Director Mark Weathington are both active board members of the Magnolia Society International which fosters global exchange of knowledge about magnolias and promotes their conservation and appreciation. Through lectures, articles and advisory roles, they help gardeners and institutions better understand and care for this beloved genus.

Tim Alderton, research technician, serves on the board of the Piedmont Chapter of the North American Rock Garden Society. His

leadership and enthusiasm help guide the society's efforts to celebrate and cultivate alpine and rock garden plants — many of which have found a home here at the JCRA.

These roles allow us not only to grow professionally, but to share what we've learned with others, contribute to national conversations, and bring back new ideas that benefit our local garden community.

We are proud to be a part of something bigger — where passion for plants, learning and public service come together to inspire and connect.



Tim sharing his love for plants.

The logo for the American Public Gardens Association, featuring a stylized green flower icon and the text "American Public Gardens Association".

Volunteer Positions with Guest Services

WEDNESDAY MAY 7, 2025
1:00 PM-2:00 PM ET

Join our webinar to learn how the passion our volunteers have for our organizations can best be shared with our visitors.

Niki Saylor
Volunteer Coordinator
Sarah P. Duke Gardens

Kathryn B. Wall
Membership & Volunteer Manager
JC Raulston Arboretum at NC State University

Christine Chessler-Stull
Volunteer & Membership Engagement Manager
Matthaei Botanical Gardens & Nichols Arboretum

Kathryn was part of an APGA panel.



Four Decades of Service

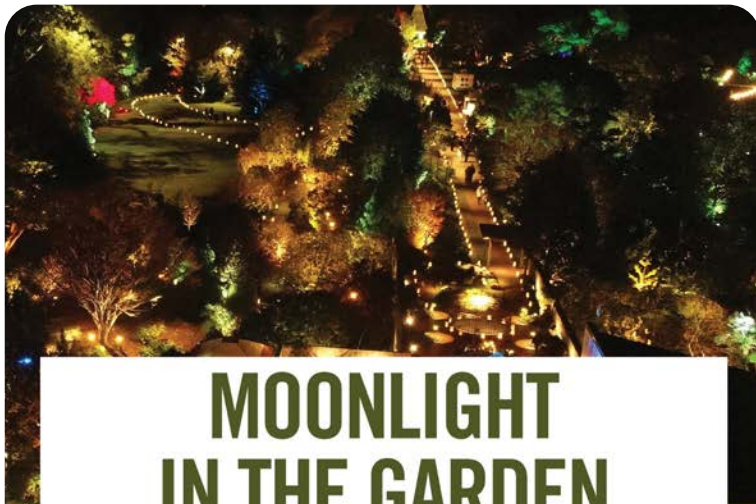
We're so pleased to share wonderful news about a truly remarkable volunteer at the JC Raulston Arboretum, Vivian Finkelstein. For over four decades, Vivian has given an incredible 8,427 recorded volunteer hours, consistently sharing her dedication and gracious spirit. We're especially proud to announce that she recently received the Lifetime Achievement Key Award for her outstanding contributions. The Triangle Nonprofit & Volunteer Leadership Center presented this special recognition at a ceremony held at the Durham Performing Arts Center on June 11, 2025.

Vivian's journey began with our very first tour guides, working directly alongside founder J. C. Raulston. She passionately shared her deep love for the garden, leading countless tours and even helping create our first tour manuals. As a welcoming face in our Visitor Center, both in early days and today, her warm presence and plant knowledge have connected countless guests.

Vivian embodies the true spirit of volunteerism. Her unwavering commitment, diverse contributions, and genuine love for the garden have left an indelible mark on the JC Raulston Arboretum. Our garden would simply not be the same without her. Thank you, Viv, we're so grateful for you!

JC Raulston Arboretum
NC State University
Campus Box 7522
Raleigh, NC 27695-7522

NONPROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
RALEIGH, NC
PERMIT NO. 2353



MOONLIGHT IN THE GARDEN PREVIEW NIGHT

**THURSDAY, NOV. 6
7 PM - 9:30 PM**

Preview Night is a special, limited-ticket evening for JCRA Members and supporters. Enjoy an all-inclusive evening with food, drinks, live music, s'mores and a relaxed stroll through the beautifully lit gardens.



Tickets go on sale in September.



2025 MOONLIGHT IN THE GARDEN

**OPENING WEEKEND: FRIDAY–SATURDAY, NOV. 7–8
SECOND WEEKEND: FRIDAY–SATURDAY, NOV. 14–15
THIRD WEEKEND: FRIDAY–SATURDAY, NOV. 21–22**

Moonlight in the Garden transforms our acclaimed garden into a breathtaking nighttime experience. Think it's stunning by day? Just wait until you see it artfully lit on a crisp November evening.



JCRA Members get first access to ticket sales and exclusive access to Anytime Tickets.