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(as of June 30, 2019)
Norfolk Botanical Garden
It's an odd thing to look back at a year when it is only fall but that's exactly what our Annual Report for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2019 does. Technically, it doesn’t even cover this summer’s “pawsome” exhibit, Barkitecture, but I digress.

One of the biggest infrastructure improvement projects we’ve undertaken over the past year is the complete refurbishment of NATO Tower and re-building of its supporting hill. A complex engineering and design problem, Michael Schnekser of Tymoff Moss Architects working with our contractor, Trident Civil, have devised an amazing solution—the use of gabion walls. The walls are created from geotechnical fabric that is attached to a rock-filled wired cage. The wall is then covered by 194 decorative concrete panels that are designed and installed at different depths, giving NATO Hill a new interesting and modern look. The wall features a multitude of planting pockets which will allow for gardens to grow at all levels along the wall; it will be a feature unto itself. Look for the completion of this project this winter. It has been on and off the drawing board since 2004. Your support has allowed us to finally make it a reality.

Last summer, the Garden launched a brand new website which compliments our mobile app and includes the redesigned logo. The new website design is user-friendly and a great tool to stay connected to what’s happening at NBG all year long.

Solar and green energy took root this past season on the Dominion Energy Garden of Lights storage building with the installation of 120 solar panels generating around 53,651 kWh of energy to power our propagation greenhouse. Within the first 9 months of the solar panels going live (Nov. 2018-July 2019), our power bill, on average, has been 78% lower than the previous year (April and May 2019 dropped 98%).

We enacted a ban on the sale of bottled water on campus to encourage guests to refill their own bottles at our free water refilling stations, thus reducing the amount of plastic entering landfills and polluting our oceans.

Did you know that:

- 1 billion dollars’ worth of plastic is dumped in U.S. landfills each year
- Bottling water produces 2.5 million tons of carbon dioxide each year, increasing greenhouse gas - a major contributor to climate change
- 17 million barrels of oil are used each year to produce plastic water bottles alone

Bottom line: the Garden’s filtered water is better for the environment and better for you. B.Y.O.B! From reusable water bottles, reusable cutlery, produce bags, coral-friendly sunblock, stainless steel & glass straws and much more—taking one small step is a HUGE step in the right direction.

Michael P. Desplaines
President & CEO
Weddings & Corporate Events
With so many private and public events taking place throughout the year, Norfolk Botanical Garden has become one of the most popular destinations and sought-after venues in Coastal Virginia. The Garden continues to be the premier wedding and event venue in the region, bringing in nearly $400,000 in revenue from 173 weddings, corporate events and private rentals. The Garden welcomed 4,482 wedding and event guests during the 2018-2019 fiscal year and was also the backdrop for 241 private portrait photography sessions.

Signature Events
In 2018, the Garden was voted #2 Best Botanical Garden Holiday Lights in the country—USA Today/10 Best Contest. Our holiday light events are our largest fundraiser and brought in 90,000 guests. Sponsored by Dominion Energy, there were 49,000 Million Bulb Walk participants, and 38,000 who drove through the Dominion Energy Garden of Lights. More than 650 guests started their New Year by running in the 2019 Garden Fun Run. A new event called Barks & Bulbs brought in 605 dogs and their owners in early January.

The Honeybee and Butterfly festivals both had record attendance at over 3,300 each and the Annual Spring Plant Sale brought in more than 4,200 eager home gardeners. NBG celebrated our historical beginnings with over 3,100 visitors and special guests during two WPA Garden Heritage Days.

The Garden was pleased to host the Virginia Camellia Society, Tidewater Daylily Society, Virginia Bonsai Society, Tidewater Orchid Society, and Tidewater African Violet Society for their popular Show & Sale Events, which attracted more than 15,000 visitors last year.
Partnering with the Eastern Virginia Rowing Association, NBG hosted five high school regattas with nearly 3,900 rowers and race spectators.

Visitor Services & Membership
The NBG family continues to grow. Over the past year Garden admissions grew 13% to over 420,000 guests. Garden Membership also grew over 10% to 13,680 member families with revenue exceeding $1,000,000 for the first time ever. The Garden hosted 2,882 out-of-town guests through our Group Tour Program; 2,486 garden enthusiasts from across the country through our participation in the American Horticultural Society Reciprocal Garden program and 6,208 Virginia Zoo members during our June membership swap. Let’s not forget our four-legged friends. More than 2,500 “Fidos” visited the Garden during our summer-long Sunday Dog Days.

Giving Back to the Community
Last year we gave 199 organizations a Family Fun Pass that covers general admission. About a third of these passes went to schools and groups that provide educational support. We also helped health and human services organizations, scouts, civic leagues, military organizations, museums, sports & youth organizations, animal welfare agencies and other entities dedicated to serving the community we all call home.

V3 Certification
This year we earned the Virginia Values Veterans certification. Participating organizations have demonstrated to the Commonwealth that they value veterans, and have made a public commitment to hire veterans into their workforce. The Virginia Values Veterans (V3) Program is an official Commonwealth of Virginia, Department of Veterans Services Program.
Environmental Stewardship

It’s a collective strategy throughout all departments to address the environmental crisis. It’s important for us to take the lead and inspire environmental behaviors with all of our guests. To that end, we partnered with the Virginia Department of Forestry to give away 2,000 Virginia stock longleaf pine seedlings last fall. It’s an easy way to make a positive local impact on the environment and help offset deforestation and reduce carbon in the atmosphere.

We held one of our first symposiums where we called attention to both the global and local effects of climate change. It was well-received and we’re planning another climate change symposium “Leaping to Solutions” on February 29, 2020.

Horticulture

Our Horticulture Team continues to explore ways to reduce our chemical footprint. This past growing season saw the start of a glyphosate reduction program where staff tested different organically based herbicides. Our greenhouse staff are using lacewings, a beneficial native insect, to control outbreaks of pest insects like aphids and mealy bugs. Other ecologically-friendly treatments like horticulture oil and a soap and alcohol mixture are part of their new go-to solutions.

Educating guests while they enjoy our gardens is a major component of our mission and an imperative of all botanical gardens. This past year, we added new interpretive signage in the Virginia Native Plant Garden and Butterfly Garden.
Environmentally Friendly

One of the most exciting sustainability initiatives is the use of solar energy to power our greenhouse. An array of 120 solar panels went live here a year ago and generates more energy on a sunny day than the greenhouse needs. Be sure to check out the solar panel dashboard on our website at norfolkbotanicalgarden.org/learn/sustainability.

Research

Botanical gardens, with their extensive and diverse plant collections and habitats, provide the perfect opportunity to work with various branches of the scientific community for research. The Garden’s grounds have supported numerous studies for several local universities on everything from native orchids to butterflies and pollinators to seed dispersal and water quality. We have been a data collection site for Old Dominion University’s study of Phenology since 2010. This is an important long-term study since it tracks seasonal changes in plants such as the onset of blooms and fruit set which is profoundly affected by changes in climate. For the past two years, we’ve also been conducting our own survey of invasive insect populations on our campus in conjunction with the American Public Garden Association. The role of a botanical garden is not only an aesthetically pleasing refuge from the demands of modern life but also one that engages with the community-at-large to foster education and conservation.

“The greatest threat to our planet is the belief that someone else will save it.”
—Robert Swan

1,328 lbs. of vegetable waste composted through our in-house kitchen composting program

147 lbs. of fluorescent light bulbs have been recycled

$3,100 reduced energy cost from solar panels
Adult Education

The past year has not only brought the Garden a newly designed GROW publication, but has also brought us a new division of the course catalog – Dig Deeper. In an effort to support the Garden’s mission, we’re bringing you more in-depth scientific programs, focusing on expanding our environmental education offerings. Our classes range from various art and cooking classes, to ever popular gardening topics and are enhanced by new partnerships with regional institutions such as the Virginia Institute of Marine Science and the Virginia Living Museum. From tidal flooding in Hampton Roads, to meet and greets with native wildlife, this year’s new programs have laid the foundation for more exciting and informative classes going forward. In addition to a variety of new classes, we’re working to be more accessible for all, and have expanded our selection of free Garden Walk and Talks, providing something for everyone. Our volunteer program is growing as well, with over 1,000 volunteers contributing over 15,000 hours! That’s an estimated value of $387,456.82 according to the Independent Sector. If you’re interesting in joining our incredible group of volunteers, opportunities are available throughout the Garden – indoors and outdoors. More information can be found on the Garden’s website and on our Facebook page.

Youth Education

Norfolk Botanical Garden’s 3-acre WOW Children’s Garden provides families and children of all ages with hands-on opportunities to learn about botany, ecology, horticulture, and other environmental topics. During the 2018-2019 school year, over 11,000 students, teachers, and chaperones visited the Garden to complete onsite guided, self-guided, and homeschool programs.
Each of our Virginia Standards of Learning-aligned programs offered these groups the chance to take classroom concepts and connect them with nature. To further highlight our growing effort to act as a community steward in the natural and environmental sciences, the NBG Youth Education Department partnered with the Virginia Air & Space Museum for a second year to conduct the STEM360 program. More than 1,200 fourth grade students participated in the program, which introduced students to plant and animal adaptations, and reinforced student understanding of flower anatomy through a flower dissection lab. The Youth Education Department will spend the next year continuing to foster an appreciation for nature and the environment through partnerships and new youth and family programs.

Outreach

It has been a record year for our community outreach program. Education and Horticulture staff presented 50 educational programs to a variety of garden clubs, professional organizations and special interest groups. We also participated in 29 festivals, expos and fairs.

Garden staff have been instrumental in supporting various local garden and beautification projects sponsored by schools and other organizations. We’re particularly excited about the relationship we’re building with the folks at The Chesapeake Bay Foundation as we help them with their gardening needs. Whether we are donating staff time and expertise or simply donating plants, we enjoy being a valuable resource for the community.

11,000+ students, teachers & chaperones exposed to NBG through youth tours

4,800+ students and families reached through educational outreach
This was a year of growth in our Horticulture Department and really, shouldn’t every year be a year of growth? Several major plantings took place, including the Canal Walk, Administration Building with corten steel retaining wall, Rose Garden Great Lawn, and others. It was great to see so many native, pollinator-friendly plants included in the planting design. It takes a lot to make it all happen – designs by our director of Living Landscapes, planting by our entire horticulture staff, and hardscape assistance from our facilities team. This team worked on many projects including an expanded walkway in the Hummingbird Garden and expanded WPA terrace.

As part of the City of Norfolk’s Sister Cities 60th anniversary with Kitakyushu, Japan, six Yoshino cherry trees were planted along the canal, keeping our aging cherry “gene pool” just a little bit younger. Two stone benches completed the design made from old City of Norfolk granite curbstones. Adjacent to our propagation greenhouse we began a cut-flower garden for the use of the NBG Flower Guild, and also planted a small orchard full of fruit-bearing trees and shrubs, thanks to a generous donation from Eastern Shore Nursery of Virginia. In the same area, NBG now has a compost demonstration area.

Thanks to the mentorship of local beekeepers, we now have our own beekeeper on staff to oversee our new hive demonstration area. This summer, a gourd tunnel was planted, and to go along with the fall theme, we planted two pumpkin patches. Now that it is officially fall, there are lots of gourds & pumpkins to see!

The Horticulture Department was invited to take their talent on the road this spring and installed a garden at the U.S. Botanic Garden in Washington, D.C. Sitting at the base of the Capitol, the display told the NBG story through the use of plants and photography.
The Garden also participated in the 2019 Virginia Flower and Garden Expo. The theme was Backyard Symphony and encouraged viewers to know local songbirds and how to attract them to their home gardens.

Brian O’Neil serves in a co-appointment role between Virginia Wesleyan University and the Garden as Director of Living Landscapes. In this role he remains the chief landscape designer and advisor to the NBG Horticulture Department and oversees the maintenance of a 2.5-acre native plant garden that surrounds the Greer Environmental Sciences Center at Virginia Wesleyan University.

Notable accomplishments at the Greer:

- additional 3,400 sq. ft. of wildflower plantings providing a bountiful habitat for pollinators
- new monarch waystation status for the Greer landscape
- planted a grove of approximately 20 Bald Cypress sapling trees on campus
- planted three areas with thirty Longleaf Pines on campus, with educational signage
- approximately 150 plant identification signs installed with help from NBG Plant Records
- hosted “In the Garden” WHRO Hearsay with Cathy Lewis along with Jim Orband at the Greer
- hosted several presentations and tours of the Greer landscape to both student and outside environmental groups
Please contact Cathy Fitzgerald to see how you can be a part of The Garden of Tomorrow. Call (757) 441-5830, ext. 319 or email Cathy at cathy.fitzgerald@nbgs.org

“How could we say no?” was our reaction when first introduced to and asked for support of Norfolk Botanical Garden’s exciting and expansive plans for The Garden of Tomorrow.

From the ecological education possibilities of the Water Education and Rowing Center to simply increasing access and availability with the newly designed and greatly expanded parking and visitor center, it is all such positive momentum towards increasing awareness for future generations.

It’s a lasting impact to support a living, growing, thriving sanctuary as a legacy for future generations to enjoy, where they will learn to truly appreciate and protect our precious environment. NBG’s annual visitation has increased dramatically over the past five years—from 275,000 visitors to 400,000—so the time is right to make this happen.

If you’ve not fully discovered all that this magical, restorative place holds within, you may not have realized the absolute treasure we have here in our own backyard! In reveling in the abundant natural and botanical artistry of NBG’s restorative gardens, how could one not choose to support the continued growth and the ability to share these gifts with others?

We are honored to be part of The Garden of Tomorrow and eagerly anticipate seeing the various elements of the project come to life for the benefit of future generations while simultaneously supporting increased interest and potential revenue in our region.

—NBG Board Member Stephanie & Joe McSweeney
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</tr>
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Annual Report 2018/2019
The Norfolk Botanical Garden Foundation is a separate 501(c)(3) whose sole mission is the support of Norfolk Botanical Garden. The Foundation invests the Garden’s endowment funds and makes an annual distribution from the funds’ earnings to assist the Garden in fulfilling its mission.

The following are current members of the Foundation’s board of directors as of June 30, 2019:

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As of June 30, 2019, the Foundation had assets of nearly $16.7 million and provided a total of $746,426 to the Garden for operating purposes in FY19. Adhering to certain donor restrictions, some of that total went to specific areas or for specific purposes in the Garden such as the Camellia Garden, Children’s Garden, Hydrangea Garden, Meadow and areas in and around Baker Hall and the Education Building. The Foundation would like to thank its donors, past and present, who have had the foresight and generosity to contribute to the Foundation, helping to ensure the viability of Norfolk Botanical Garden for generations to come.
fiscal report

revenues fy 2019
$7,365,107
contributions $2,771,393
membership $1,059,090
admissions $899,299
program fees $1,088,738
investments $835,026
gift shop $342,040
rental $369,521

expenses fy 2019
$6,034,536
programs $5,229,753
administration $625,457
fundraising $179,326
Thank You
You have made a remarkable difference in helping the Garden flourish. You help us connect with local communities, provide educational programs for children & adults, and inspire environmental stewardship.