

# Making History

Norfolk Botanical Garden and Clenise Platt are making history. Clenise is a long-time supporter of the Garden and joined our Board of Directors in 2014. She previously served as the Board's Treasurer and now has the distinction of being elected its Chair—the first African-American to hold this position in the Board's history. "It is amazing to me that I am the Chair of the Board of the Garden I grew up playing in as a little girl," said Clenise Platt. "Then add to that, the significance of me being the first African-American Chair of the Garden, and that makes this a very special moment for me," she said.

Clenise's connection to the Garden goes back to her youth when she visited as a young child with her brother and mother. While creating fond memories with her family, she was also building a life-long connection with the Garden. In the late 1930s, 220 African Americans—mostly women—were hired as part of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) to clear swampland and plant the first azaleas. Clenise's leadership has helped the Garden continue to share their compelling story.

As chair of NBG's President's Council on Inclusion and Diversity, Clenise works closely with the Board, staff, and stakeholders to bring much-needed awareness to the Garden's history, diversity, equity and inclusion. She spearheaded efforts to add *Garden Club-WPA*, the life-size painting by renowned artist Maizelle, to the Garden's permanent art collection. The painting is now proudly displayed in the Baker Hall Visitor Center. Additionally, she proposed the addition of the Groundbreaker Awards to the annual WPA Heritage Celebration to honor 'groundbreaking' individuals. Each year the Garden hosts a WPA Garden Heritage Celebration to honor the individuals who toiled to create such a beautiful garden for the community.

Not only does Clenise lead the Garden's Board and two of its committees, she is also a member of the NBG Foundation Board. But she doesn't stop there! She is heavily involved in the community as an active Rotarian, author, speaker, adjunct professor at Tidewater Community College and founder of The Plattinum Group. Her list of accolades is long and distinguished; the Garden is fortunate to have her at the helm.

The future is looking bright as we launch The Garden of Tomorrow campaign and Clenise is the perfect person to lead us through this next phase. "The Garden has evolved over the years into an award-winning beautiful space for people of all ages, shades, backgrounds and interests," Clenise said. "We're not done yet! We are dreaming BIG at NBG and the primary focus during this term is sharing our vision for the Garden's future with others and inviting them to join me, the NBG Board members and other generous donors in contributing to The Garden of Tomorrow Campaign," she said. Join Norfolk Botanical Garden in welcoming Clenise Platt as the new NBG Board Chair!

