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## San Diego Botanic Garden Names Adam Schwerner President & CEO

*Schwerner becomes the third President & CEO in the Garden's 55-year history, and brings over 30 years of experience, most recently from Disney*

**Encinitas, Calif. (May 13, 2026)** – San Diego Botanic Garden is pleased to announce the appointment of Adam Schwerner as its new President & CEO. A seasoned executive with over 30 years of experience in public horticulture, landscape design, and visual storytelling, Adam brings a dynamic combination of leadership, creativity, and strategic vision to the Garden as it continues to grow as one of the region's premier cultural and environmental destinations. Adam will become only the third person to hold the title of President & CEO in the Garden's 55-year history, and will officially begin this new role on June 15, 2026.

Adam most recently served as the Director of Horticulture and Resort Enhancement at the Disneyland Resort, where he oversaw horticulture, landscape, facilities, and visual storytelling across Disneyland Park, Disney California Adventure, Downtown Disney, and provided oversight of horticulture and holiday overlays at the Resort's hotel. In this role, he led large-scale operational and creative initiatives that enhanced the guest experience while maintaining world-class standards across the resort's expansive properties.

"San Diego Botanic Garden is entering an exciting new chapter, and we are delighted to welcome Adam Schwerner as our next President and Chief Executive Officer," said Randi Coopersmith, Board Chair at San Diego Botanic Garden. "Adam's appointment marks both a continuation of our strong legacy and a bold step toward the future. His creativity, leadership, and commitment to community engagement make him uniquely positioned to expand the Garden's impact and visibility for generations to come."

Prior to his time at Disney, Adam held several leadership roles with the Chicago Park District, including Director of Cultural and Natural Resources and Director of Natural Resources. During his tenure, he founded and led a multidisciplinary department that integrated arts, culture, and natural resources while managing large teams and budgets. He oversaw the landscape management of 9,500 acres, including natural areas, lakefronts, and major gardens, supervised

forestry operations caring for its 180,000 trees, provided executive oversight for conservatories and supported major capital and restoration initiatives. In addition, he managed the team responsible for producing 1,000 cultural events across Chicago parks each year through the district's "Night Out in the Parks" program, held annually from June through October.

"Taking over from my good friend Ari Novy is wonderful," said Schwerner. "He, the staff and Board have done tremendous work moving the Garden forward and I am so very thrilled to continue their great work."

Adam holds a Master of Business Administration from Chapman University and a Bachelor of Science in Ornamental Horticulture from Rutgers University. He is widely recognized for his ability to partner with boards and nonprofit foundations, align programming with donor interests, and advance capital-ready projects. Through both professional and volunteer leadership roles, he has strengthened institutional credibility and philanthropic readiness through strategic storytelling and community engagement.

Current President & CEO, Ari Novy, Ph.D., has been at the helm of San Diego Botanic Garden for the last eight years, stepping into the role following Julian Duval's retirement after a 24-year tenure. Under Novy's leadership, budget and staff have tripled, science and conservation programs have flourished, and the Garden has strengthened its role as a place for joy, learning, and curiosity.

"I couldn't be more thrilled that Adam has been appointed as the next President and CEO of San Diego Botanic Garden," said Novy. "I've known Adam as a friend and colleague in the public garden sector for many years. He is a master horticulturist, visionary artist, and experienced public garden leader. I'm excited to watch the Garden thrive under his leadership."

For more information about San Diego Botanic Garden, please visit [www.sdbg.org](http://www.sdbg.org).

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### **About San Diego Botanic Garden**

Established in 1970, San Diego Botanic Garden (SDBG) is an urban oasis located in Encinitas, California, just north of San Diego. The Garden's 37-acres and 8,000 square foot glass conservatory display more than 5,300 plant species and varieties. As a premier 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization for botanical science and conservation, SDBG is involved in conservation horticulture, botany, and applied plant sciences to address our biggest local and global challenges, from biodiversity loss to climate change, food insecurity to environmental degradation. Featuring four miles of trails, SDBG has the largest public bamboo collection in North America; gardens representing different regions and flora of the world; and demonstration gardens showcasing fruits and vegetables, water-smart ornamentals, and native plants.

Through an array of educational programming, events and activities for both children and adults, the Garden aims to create, share and apply plant wisdom to the world. Learn more at [sdbg.org](http://sdbg.org).

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