



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Botanic Gardens Collaborate to Mentor the Next Generation of Scientists

RaMP program is aimed at researching global decline of plant biodiversity while expanding opportunities for historically underserved communities in the workforce

San Diego, Calif. (February 2023) – Two California botanic gardens – [San Diego Botanic Garden](#) (SDBG) in Encinitas and [California Botanic Garden](#) (CalBG) in Claremont – will be among four public gardens nationwide involved in a new national research network created to provide training in plant science for post-graduates.

The network, known as the Rare Plant RaMP (Research & Mentoring for Postbaccalaureates in Biological Sciences) program seeks to investigate the unprecedented global decline of plant biodiversity and to broaden the experience of individuals who were not able to participate extensively in research during their undergraduate studies. The program consists of yearlong opportunities to work as part of the science team within the participating botanic gardens. It is particularly intended for individuals from demographics historically excluded from the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) workforce, first-generation scholars, and those from under-resourced institutions.

Made possible by funding from the National Science Foundation, the network is led by the Atlanta Botanical Garden and, in addition to SDBG and CalBG, also includes a partnership with The Morton Arboretum in Illinois. The network will help formalize mentoring and training programs in the workforce, rather than exclusively in collegiate settings.

SDBG in collaboration with the Salk Institute for Biological Studies, will work with mentees to engage in field botany, conservation horticulture, lab-based genetic, genomic and chemical analysis, and design of rare plant monitoring. The program at SDBG will specifically focus on the conservation of California native plants, medicinal plants, and plants useful for food and agriculture. Mentors providing hands-on training and guidance include SDBG President and CEO Dr. Ari Novy, SDBG Senior Director of Science and Conservation Dr. Colin Khoury, and SDBG Research Associate and Research Professor at Salk Institute Dr. Todd Michael.

“Working to better understand and protect biodiversity, and to empower a broader diversity of new scientists, are among our most important goals,” says Dr. Khoury, “We couldn’t be more thrilled to participate in this initiative.



“The NSF Rare Plant RaMP is an incredible opportunity to inspire a new generation of scientists about plants and how studying them is not only extremely interesting science, but also will play a role in a better future for humanity,” says Professor Michael.

California Botanic Garden will engage mentees in conservation genomics, comparative biology, common garden studies, and field botany, with an eye towards clarifying taxonomic issues to work towards more effective conservation of California rare plant populations in unique habitats like alkali wetlands. Mentees will have access to the dynamic and active research, conservation, and restoration programs at a botanic garden exclusively dedicated to the conservation, preservation, and appreciation of California Native Plants. Mentors Naomi Fraga (CalBG Director of Conservation Programs) and Carrie Kiel (CalBG Conservation Geneticist) are excited by this tremendous opportunity to build and diversify the next generation of scientists and conservationists working with rare plants.

“Covid strongly impacted hands-on research experiences for many undergraduates,” says Kiel. “This excellent new program will provide young scientists with diverse training and networking opportunities after a difficult few years.”

In addition to research experience, RaMP offers program participants:

- Bi-weekly program-wide meetings with peers from participating gardens to join in discussion sessions on literature, research skills and ethics, science and communication, and professional development and career guidance.
- Exchange visits and workshops providing opportunities to visit other academic, government or industry labs to further their professional goals.
- Attendance at the annual Center for Plant Conservation (CPC) conference to present research alongside their peers, while also networking with other experts in their fields of interest.
- An annual program symposium where mentees will present their research.
- A yearly stipend with benefits, funded travel expenses for conferences, workshops and exchange visits.

Program eligibility applies to individuals who are first-generation college students, students from low-income households, or those from groups historically excluded from STEM. Participants must have a baccalaureate college degree before participating in the program (applicants must apply to the program before or within four years of graduation, with extensions allowed for family, medical leave, or military service). Individuals cannot be currently enrolled or accepted into a graduate program and must be U.S. citizens, U.S. nationals, or permanent residents of the United States.

For more information about the program and applications, visit the website [here](#).



About San Diego Botanic Garden:

Established in 1970, San Diego Botanic Garden (SDBG) is a 37-acre urban oasis located in Encinitas, California, just north of San Diego. The Garden's four miles of trails and 8,000 square foot glass conservatory display more than 5,300 plant species and varieties. A premiere institution for botanical science and conservation, SDBG is actively 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. 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. | FB [@SDBotanicGarden](https://www.facebook.com/SDBotanicGarden) | Instagram [@sandiegobotanicgarden](https://www.instagram.com/sandiegobotanicgarden) | Twitter [@SDBGarden](https://twitter.com/SDBGarden) | TikTok [@sandiegobotanicgarden](https://www.tiktok.com/@sandiegobotanicgarden)

About California Botanic Garden: California Botanic Garden is dedicated to California native plants, promoting botany, conservation and horticulture to inspire and educate the public and scientific community about California's native flora. The Garden is a living museum with curated collections of more than 22,000 California native plants, some of which are rare or endangered. Spread across 86 acres in Claremont, California, CalBG displays about 2000 taxa of California plants and includes those native to the California Floristic Province. Garden staff are also active in research, conservation, and restoration programs across Southern California. More info: www.calbg.org.

About the Salk Institute for Biological Studies:

Every cure has a starting point. The Salk Institute embodies Jonas Salk's mission to dare to make dreams into reality. Its internationally renowned and award-winning scientists explore the very foundations of life, seeking new understandings in neuroscience, genetics, immunology, plant biology, and more. The Institute is an independent nonprofit organization and architectural landmark: small by choice, intimate by nature, and fearless in the face of any challenge. Be it cancer or Alzheimer's disease, aging, or diabetes, Salk is where cures begin. Learn more at: salk.edu.