

# 2024 Annual Report



SAN DIEGO  
BOTANIC  
GARDEN

## Growth in Full Bloom

In 2024, the Garden celebrated the completion of paved pathways linking the Bamboo Garden to the newly opened Pacific Promenade overlook, along with a fully redesigned Desert Garden showcasing hundreds of stunning plants like this *Aloe ferox* (Cape Aloe) and sweeping ocean views.



# Letter from our CEO & Board Chair

Building on the momentum of 2023, our Garden continued to grow while remaining a beautiful place of respite, learning, and wonder.

A dynamic lineup of new exhibitions alongside seasonal favorites like *World of Orchids* and the return of our dazzling *Lightscape* winter event, attracted thousands of visitors throughout the year. Adding to the excitement, two rare and spectacular corpse flower blooms from our permanent collection captivated audiences both on-site and online.

Our educational programs continued to spark curiosity and foster meaningful connections with nature for people of all ages and backgrounds. We also saw significant advancements in our science, conservation, and horticulture programs, strengthening partnerships with research institutions, nonprofits, and tribal governments across the country.

In 2024, the Garden introduced exciting new ways to engage with our community. We launched our first Members Only Morning, a new quarterly program offering early hours access and activities exclusively to our Members, along with Perennials, a recurring giving program that invites supporters to join a growing community united by a shared passion for nature and conservation.

As we look ahead to 2025, our dedication remains strong. This year is especially meaningful as we celebrate our 55th anniversary. We're excited to share a year filled with special events and activities to mark this milestone. Most importantly, this is our chance to express our deep gratitude to you — our supporters — who have helped us grow. Thanks to your generosity and support, the Garden is flourishing with endless possibilities.



Ari Novy, PhD,  
President & CEO



Randi Coopersmith  
Chair, Board of Trustees

## SDBG *by the numbers*

### Membership Households

6,888

Average member households  
by monthly total

### Guest Attendance

218,000

### Museums for All

4,590 (+25%)

### Employee Growth

59 (+5%)

Number of employees

### Volunteer Community

208 (+14%)

Total number of volunteers

19,686 (+4%)

Volunteer hours

### Online Reach

99,946 (+35%)

Email subscribers

669K (+8%)

Website visitors

40.4K (+4%)

Facebook page likes

2.2M (+5%)

Facebook page reach

73.5K (+16%)

Instagram followers

1.2M (+9%)

Instagram reach

# Exhibitions & Events



## World of Orchids

May 4 – 27  
Attendees: 7,710



## Summer Nights Concert Series & Wine Presentation

July 11, 18, 25 /  
August 1, 8, 15, 22, 29  
Attendees: 733

## Bamboo: Beautiful Massive Grasses

September 14 – October 1  
Attendees: 5,996



## Fall Festival

September 21  
Attendees: 724

## Teacher Resource Fair

October 8  
Attendees: 147



## Santa's Candy Cane Conservatory

December 7  
Attendees: 72 families

## Lightscape

November 15, 2024 – January 5, 2025

Returning to the Garden for the third year, *Lightscape* captivated **more than 100,000 visitors** from around the country. In addition to becoming an annual holiday tradition for many Members and regular visitors, this unique winter experience also attracts new audiences — 43% of survey respondents reported visiting the Garden for the first time.

## Lightscape by the numbers

101,505

Attendees

39

Nights of show

408,205

Pageviews of landing page

9.6M

Content views across  
Facebook and Instagram

428 press articles

**Over 341.2 million impressions** with national and international coverage in *Travel + Leisure*, *The Weather Channel*, and *The Los Angeles Times*, along with consistent placement in all major local media outlets including ABC 10 News, CBS 8, FOX 5, KPBS, KUSI, NBC 7, *San Diego Union-Tribune*, *San Diego Magazine*, and more.



# Science & Conservation

A close-up photograph of a cluster of small, bright yellow flowers with six petals and prominent stamens. The flowers are in various stages of bloom, with some fully open and others as buds. The background is a soft, out-of-focus field of similar yellow flowers, creating a warm and naturalistic setting.

The Science & Conservation team continued to make significant progress in plant research, conservation, and habitat restoration, growing to more than 30 active projects with local and global impacts. This year, we expanded community-based restoration efforts, improving public parks and ecosystems that support native coastal plants and wildlife while also providing educational value for thousands in the community. Collaborating with local organizations and national agencies, we contributed to the protection of rare and unique species in regional habitats like Otay Mountain and Anza Borrego. Additionally, through our participation in the Rare Plant RaMP (Research & Mentoring for Post-baccalaureates in Biological Sciences) network and partnerships with local universities, we trained over 20 early-career researchers, fostering the next generation of plant scientists.

## **Additional Highlights:**

- Conserved 45+ native plant species in San Diego through strategic collections, habitat restoration, and enhanced regional land management practices.
- Restored and enhanced 25+ acres of habitats across San Diego County to support biodiversity and ecosystem health.
- Developed a robust medicinal plants program in collaboration with a consortium of local and regional partners, including Native American and other Indigenous communities, to explore the medicinal potential of plant collections.
- Visited 7 foreign countries for collaborative research projects, knowledge exchanges, professional conferences and scientific symposia.

These efforts strengthen the Garden's role as a leader in plant research and conservation, ensuring a thriving future for both plants and people.





## Science & Conservation by the numbers

### New collections from the wild

70

Accessions

2,004

Maternal lines

### Number distributed and out-planted native plants

To botanical gardens, tribes, universities and other partners:

11

Seed or tissue accessions

153

Plants (+178%)

950

at restoration sites (+58%)

### Peer-reviewed scientific articles published

13 (+8%)

### Active science and conservation projects

34

### Collaborating partners/organizations

100+

### Rare plant occurrences surveyed in the wild

73

### Days in the field

142 (+8%)

### Federally funded projects

17



## Collections by the Numbers

### Current living accessions

9,734

13,465 current living individual plants in collection

### Total plants mapped

4,791 (+6%)

### Total unique taxa

6,034

Introduced 231 taxa and cultivars new to our collection (+34%)

2,285

Wild collected plant accessions added to collection, from 240 different taxa

## Medicinal Plants Symposium

The Garden hosted its first Medicinal Plants Research Symposium in February. Leaders from academia, industry, and nonprofits alongside Native American tribal governments and community partners came together to foster collaborations in San Diego County. The two-day event featured keynote speakers and panel discussions, as well as a guided tour of the new Medicinal Garden that opened in February 2024. Attendees celebrated the launch of the first SDBG smartphone app and Medicinal Plants Self-Guided Tour, which help enhance public engagement and education. The symposium culminated in a public-facing workshop featuring healers and teachers from as far as Brazil, offering cross-cultural exchanges of wisdom and practices. The event highlighted accomplishments from the pilot phase of the Medicinal Plants Project, which has grown to include a 16-partner multi-sector advisory and participatory research consortium that advances the development of new plant-based medicines for the future well-being of our society.



# Community Connections



## *by the numbers*

### **School Groups & Youth Programs** *(students served and participated)*

**48** Schools and youth groups onsite

**40%** Title 1 schools

**982** Participants in self-guided tours (+19%)

**2,335** Students visited the Garden (+18%)

**2,442** Students served overall (onsite and offsite) (+19%)

**148** Days of SAPLinGS

**14,293** SAPLinGS participants

### **Adult Education & Wellness Programs**

**153** Adult classes

**1,551** Total participants (+37%)

**12** Bird Walks with **336 participants** (+42%)

**20** Butterfly Walks with **136 participants**

### **Educational Outreach**

**Discovery Fest (with Solana Beach School District):**

**2,000** Participants

**Nature Night (with San Diego Children's Discovery Museum)**

**300** Participants

**Access Afternoons (with Community Resource Center)**

**46** Participants and Garden visitors

With a commitment to providing educational experiences that spark curiosity, exploration, and a deeper connection to nature, the Education department expanded both its programming and its reach among youth and adult participants. A diverse roster of adult classes and workshops — from DIY succulent arranging to immersive sound healing experiences — provided over 1,500 participants with meaningful opportunities to connect with nature and experience the Garden as a restorative space for learning and wellness throughout the year.

At the Garden, our SAPLinGS (Science, Art, and PLayer in Garden Spaces) program engaged more than 14,000 children, while offsite initiatives, such as plantings at restoration sites and participation in community events, provided learning opportunities and educational resources to a wide range of audiences — further strengthening the Garden's impact beyond our 37 acres.

## **Planting Seeds for A Greener Future**

In January and March, we partnered with SDGE and two local schools to plant more than 200 native plants at Cottonwood Creek. Working alongside over 100 students from Park Dale Lane Elementary and the Grauer School, our Education and Science & Conservation teams led hands-on educational activities to teach middle and high school students about the importance of native plant species and habitat restoration for wildlife. Community-based restoration projects like this are a key pillar of our work, enhancing shared public spaces while raising awareness about the importance of our ecosystems. We are not only preserving the environment, but also safeguarding the health and well-being of our communities — ensuring lasting educational and recreational opportunities for generations to come.



The San Diego Botanic Garden gratefully acknowledges the following Larabee Society Members who contributed \$1,200–\$10,000. Thank you to our 6,000+ dedicated Members at every level for helping our Garden flourish every day!

### **Torrey Pine**

Patrick Anderson & Ron Koren

Martin & Carol Dickinson

Mark & Jenny Dowling

Paul Ecke & Julie Hampton

Janet Silva Kister & John Kister

Tom & Cathy Staver

### **Sapphire Tower**

Randi Coopersmith & Marissa Poratto

Anna Dreilinger

Jim & Judy Farley

Mary & Jeff Friestedt

Jennifer Moores and Karl Eckstine

Mary Rodriguez & David Ross

Carl Ware & Betsy O'Neill

### **Cork Oak**

Charles Aldrich & Carlos Castaneda

Ray & Bonnie Brooks

Mrs. Nancy Celick

Mary Hilfiker

Neil & Clarice Hokanson

Ann Hunter-Welborn & David Welborn

Lois A. Jones

Tyler & Diane Miller

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Arlene & Ron Prater

William & Mary Rawlings

Steve Seaborg

Audrey Terras & Harold Stark

Kathleen & Jeffrey Thuner

Elizabeth & Timothy Wright

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Charles & Katherine Anderson

Eric & Mary Anderson

Tom & Carla Applegate

Andra Moran Bacon & Kacey Bacon

Gladys Baird

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Pat Welsh

Dolores & W. R. Welty

Will & Sally Willis

Deborah Young & Sayuri Tomimura

Bart Ziegler

## **FINANCIAL INFORMATION** *Reported for FY July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024*

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**TOTAL REVENUE:** \$9.9M (+13%)

Contributions: \$2.9M (+45%)

Earned Income: \$6.5M

Other: \$500,000 (+77%)

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**TOTAL EXPENSES:** \$9M

Programs: \$7M

Management/General: \$1.7 M

Fundraising: \$280,000

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**NET INCOME:** \$880,000



# Thank you to our Major Donors and Corporate Partners who help us build a future for the Garden that benefits our community, region, and planet.

## MAJOR DONORS

### \$1,000,000+

Harry and Judith Collins Foundation  
The Donald C. & Elizabeth M. Dickinson Foundation

### \$100,000+

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Anonymous Board Member  
Alana Asmussen  
Bridget Rose Foundation, Inc.  
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Janet Silva Kister & John Kister  
The Matava Family  
Vann & Carol Parker  
Tom & Cathy Staver

### \$50,000 to \$99,999

National Science Foundation via Atlanta Botanical Garden  
The Laura I. Walker Trust

### \$25,000 to \$49,999

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### \$10,000 to \$24,999

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Ned Jaquith Foundation  
Steve Seaborg

U.S. Botanic Garden -  
U.S. Architect of the Capitol  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
Katherine D. White  
Elizabeth & Timothy Wright  
Bart Ziegler

### \$1,000 to \$2,499

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Ellen & Aaron Anderson  
Charles & Katherine Anderson  
Tom & Carla Applegate  
Christina Back  
Andra Moran Bacon  
Gladys Baird  
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