

# PLANS FOR HOUSTON BOTANIC GARDENS UNVEILED: BOTANIC BEGINNINGS

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**West 8's plans for Phase One of Houston Botanic Garden, called "Botanic Beginnings" have been unveiled. Set to open to the public in fall 2020, the 120-acres of botanic gardens including wetlands, a children's garden and nature play area, picnic groves, a tree farm, trails and an events lawn will welcome Houstonians from all walks of life.**

Houston Botanic Garden's first phase will be emblematic of the energy, diversity and spirit of Houston, America's fastest growing, most multi-cultural metropolis. The garden will become a living museum that showcases international and native plant collections, hosts educational classes to children and adults, and provides engaging programming that will embrace the natural settings of the garden. Ultimately, the garden will share beauty and bring joy, but also support a greater mission of conserving the diversity of plants from around the world and inspire appreciation for our precious natural world.

"We are honored to be working with West 8, a visionary leader in landscape design. With their expertise, we hope to bring Houstonians an urban oasis where they can disconnect and appreciate the beauty of nature—from rare and exotic plants they have never encountered to natural areas reflecting Houston's ecosystems," said **Claudia Gee Vassar**, President & General Counsel, Houston Botanic Garden.

A unique site that is bisected by the Sims Bayou and the Sims Bayou meander, the Garden's bayou-side location allows West 8 the unique opportunity to integrate Houston's native waterways into the concept of the Garden and offers immediate landscape identity to Houston's first Botanic Garden.

"We are thrilled to be partnered with the green community and the Houston Botanic Garden team for the design of Houston's first Botanic Garden. The astonishing array of plant life that can be grown in Houston, combined with this city's love of gardens will make this one of the most beloved collections in the world. To be involved in the design of a cultural and scientific institution of such great relevance in our nation's most diverse city is truly a once-in-a-career commission" says **Claire Agre**, Principal of West 8's New York and Rotterdam based design team.

The following "Botanic Beginnings"-features will welcome guests in 2020:

## **Global Collection Garden**

The Global Collection Garden will be the setting for Houston Botanic Garden's diverse collections and spectacular horticultural exhibits. Three zones within the garden organize Tropical and Subtropical and Arid collections from around the globe into a meandering garden for wandering, respite and

small events. Nestled within the garden, small “cabinets” will be available for staff to access educational materials, children to play, or and visitors to find a shady resting spot. Within the Global Collection Garden, the site will be broken up by undulating topography, stepping stones, secret pathways, and occasional surprises such as a rose-covered pergola and small children’s discovery trails. The experience of the garden will be immersive and surprising, with pathways allowing all users to explore the gardens for hours.

### **Edible Garden**

Houston’s rich diversity of cuisine is combined with the beauty of food and joy of eating in the Edible Garden. Small shady pockets will offer visitors places to gather under Pecan trees, dine on a cafe terrace in the shade of Olive Trees, Arbors covered in edible grapes, roses, and gourds, a children’s demonstration kitchen, and seasonal displays of plants from around the world including citrus, dates and aquatic species.

### **Wedding Glade and Event Lawn**

The Event Lawn will offer larger events for visitors from all walks of life. Educational programming and performing arts will be hosted here on the banks of Sims Bayou, with a backdrop of undulating meadows and trees. To the north, surrounded by an existing grove of Oak Trees and surrounded by a stunning Magnolia collection, couples can set romantic weddings surrounded by nature with a lush green backdrop.

### **Susan Garver Discovery Garden**

Childhood in the garden reaches its pinnacle at the Children’s Lagoon. By utilizing an existing pond, the design team has created a new, 3-acre garden that exhibits some of the wildest and most appealing plants for children, including carnivorous pitcher plants and water-loving species. A maze of boardwalks amongst reeds and iris, a sandy beach and naturalistic play structures in the forest allow children to spend time in the Garden exploring the natural world in every way.

Leaving the cultivated gardens, guests can explore even further using repurposed trails, attend events on generous lawn areas or participate in a range of educational programming. Houston Botanic Garden is blossoming at a time that Houston is enthusiastically embracing transformational green space projects. The botanic garden will also enrich Houstonians lives through educational displays and programming, serve as a model for sustainability and inspire all who visit to become environmental stewards as they learn more about plants and the natural world.

### **About Houston Botanic Garden**

Houston Botanic Garden is a non-profit organization leading the way to establish and grow a world-class botanic garden in Houston. Formed in 2002, Houston Botanic Garden is working steadfastly to create a garden rich in educational opportunities, which also serves as a place for reflection and observation, and is a beloved one-of-a-kind destination filled with discovery.

Houston Botanic Garden expects to break ground in 2018 on a 120 acre-site located a short distance outside downtown Houston. The first of several planned phases over the next 30 years will lead the design and initial construction of Houston’s next major cultural institution. Once open, the garden will provide a place to learn about plants, conservation, and nature, connect Houstonians across different cultures and ethnicities, and provide the missing piece to our world-class city’s greenspace.

more information: [Houston Botanic Phase One “Botanic Beginnings”](#)