



# 2024 DONOR IMPACT REPORT

Where People, Plants & Nature Cultivate Unforgettable Experiences





# OUR ROLE

Royal Botanical Gardens (RBG) is the not-for-profit caretaker of 2,130+ acres of land and ecosystems surrounded by Canada’s largest urban environment. It is an educator and experience creator delivering cultural, artistic and culinary experiences throughout its diverse network of gardens and natural spaces.



## OUR MISSION

We dedicate our expertise in horticulture, conservation, science and education to connect people, plants and place for the purpose of nurturing and preserving healthy growing life on our planet.



## OUR VISION

A world in which everyone is awake to the beauty, diversity and necessity of plants.





## INITIATIVES

- Continue to protect and restore nature sanctuaries and environmentally sensitive habitats.
- Manage our collections and create display gardens to use as a backdrop for a wide variety of artistic, cultural and culinary events and activations to grow engagement and visitation beyond the current visitor base.
- Nurture a culture that is entrepreneurial, end user oriented, highly adaptable and future oriented.
- Execute early work and planning that will lay the foundation for the implementation of the Master Plan.

## Fast Facts

Officially incorporated in **1941**  
**1993** Designated a National Historic site

 **2,137** Acres in size including:  
**130** Acres of cultivated gardens and an arboretum  
**2,007** Acres of nature sanctuaries

 **23,769** Members  
**15,134** Membership households

 **415,300** Trail visitors



# A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO

As we reflect on the past year, I am filled with gratitude and admiration for the generosity of our donors and the passion of our community. Thanks to your unwavering support, Royal Botanical Gardens continues to flourish, evolve, and inspire—bringing to life the vision set forth in our *Master Plan* while reinforcing our role as *Canada's largest botanical garden*.

Since 2020, we have embarked on a journey of transformation, with an emphasis on becoming a *Centre of Excellence and A Cultural Hub*. With each passing year, we have made meaningful strides in elevating our gardens, expanding conservation efforts, and creating more immersive and enriching experiences for our visitors. From revitalizing indoor horticulture at RBG Centre—including the renovation of the Mediterranean Garden—to the ongoing transformation of Hendrie Park into a true *showcase garden*, these advancements are shaping the future of RBG in profound and lasting ways.

At the heart of this transformation is you. Your belief in our mission has empowered us to create vibrant, dynamic spaces where people can connect with nature, where biodiversity is protected, and where learning and discovery flourish. Thanks to your generosity, we are making a tangible impact—enhancing visitor experiences, preserving critical ecosystems, and ensuring that RBG remains a place of wonder for generations to come.

As we look to the future, we are energized by the opportunities ahead. We are laying the groundwork for long-term success through strategic planning, thoughtful investments, and ambitious projects that will continue to position RBG as a leader in botanical excellence and environmental stewardship. With your support, we will continue to grow, innovate, and inspire.

On behalf of the entire RBG team, thank you for your dedication, generosity, and belief in our vision. The best is yet to come, and we look forward to sharing the journey with you.

With gratitude,



Nancy Rowland

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nancy Rowland".

Chief Executive Officer  
Royal Botanical Gardens



# 2024 HIGHLIGHTS

## HORTICULTURE EXCELLENCE



242,712

Living Plants in our Collection

6,609 Taxa

143 Families

706 Genera

1,971 Species

## PROTECTING OUR NATURAL LANDS



16,631

Native Species Planted



9,117

Plant Accessions



62,685

Invasive Plants Removed



65,000+

Plant specimens preserved in our herbarium for scientific research

## PROTECTING MARSHLANDS



73

Turtle Nests Protected

1000 New hatchlings  
including Endangered  
Blandings Turtles

40 New sites of  
Phragmites (Giant  
Reed Grass) eliminated

## ADVANCING ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION



24,054

Students Attended 458  
On-site School Programs

5,657 students  
attended 222 virtual  
school programs

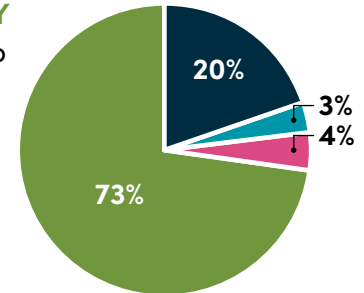
2,865 March  
Break, Summer and  
Winter day campers

## Donations Raised

\$3,132,749

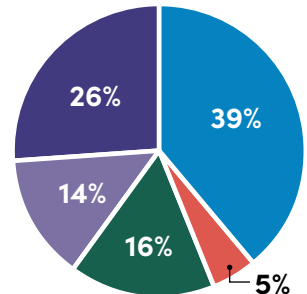
### REVENUE SUMMARY

- Province of Ontario  
\$4,036,060
- City of Hamilton  
\$673,559
- Region of Halton  
\$894,357
- Self-Generated Revenue  
\$14,806,252



### EXPENDITURES

- Admission, Sales  
& Incremental  
\$8,522,935
- Fundraising  
& Grant  
\$1,104,124
- Site Maintenance  
\$3,516,779
- Administration  
\$3,031,025
- Conservation, Gardens,  
Collection Management  
& Science Communication  
\$5,667,230



Please be advised that the revenue received during the year is different from the revenue recognized in the financial statements. This is primarily due to the fact that revenue is recognized only as funds are spent. Unspent amounts are reported as deferred revenue on the balance sheet.

# THANK YOU

On behalf of Royal Botanical Gardens, the Board of Directors, staff, and volunteers, we extend our heartfelt gratitude for your continued support and generous donations in 2024. Your unwavering commitment has made a meaningful difference, and we are truly thankful.

Thanks to your generosity, we are able to connect countless people, plants, and places—nurturing and preserving a thriving natural world while celebrating the cultural experiences that bring our community together. Nature has a remarkable way of enriching our lives, and your support helps ensure that these cherished spaces remain a sanctuary for discovery, learning, and shared experiences.

Your contributions have directly supported the conservation and preservation of RBG's natural lands, helping to protect vital ecosystems, restore biodiversity, and safeguard habitats for countless plant and animal species. From wetland restoration to invasive species management and ecological research, your generosity ensures that RBG continues to be a leader in environmental stewardship, preserving these spaces for future generations to enjoy.

This year, your support has also helped expand the cultural events that make RBG a vibrant hub of connection and creativity. From the enchanting glow of the Pumpkin Trail, where families gather to experience the magic of autumn nights, to the sparkling beauty of Winter Wonders, where twinkling lights and seasonal festivities transform the gardens into a wintertime wonderland, your generosity has allowed us to create memorable experiences that bring people closer to nature and each other.

Music has also filled our gardens throughout the seasons, thanks to you. Whether it's the WinterTide Music Series, bringing warmth and joy to the colder months, the lively outdoor performances of our Summer Music in the Gardens Series, or the intimate charm of the Fall Concert Under the Harvest Moon, your generosity has helped us create moments of harmony where nature and music intertwine.

From all of us at RBG—and from nature itself—thank you for making this possible. We invite you to explore the following pages to learn more about the profound impact you've made and the many ways we continue to grow, together.



## SHOUT-OUT TO OUR DEDICATED DONORS!

A heartfelt thank you to our incredible supporters who adapted and continued their generosity by switching to alternative donation methods during the 2024 Canada Post strike. Your commitment to Royal Botanical Gardens and our mission didn't waver, and because of you, our vital conservation, education, and cultural programs remained strong.

Thank you for standing with us and for being such an important part of our RBG family!

# FOUR YEARS OF GROWTH

## Progress on RBG's Master Plan

In 2020, RBG embarked on a bold journey, unveiling a transformative Master Plan Framework to shape our future as Canada's largest botanical garden. Rooted in a commitment to elevate visitor experiences, deepen conservation impact, and steward our gardens for future generations, this plan set the stage for extraordinary growth. While the idea of becoming a Centre of Excellence originated in the Master Plan Framework, it was through our Board-approved Strategic Plan in fall 2021 that the vision of emerging as both a Centre of Excellence and vibrant Cultural Hub truly took flight—propelling RBG toward national leadership, broader community reach, and lasting impact.

Now, four years later, we are proud to share the remarkable progress we've made. Through thoughtful planning, investment, and generous donor support, RBG has grown in ways that once felt like a distant dream. Step by step, we have strengthened our foundation and brought this vision to life—ensuring that every visit to RBG is more inspiring, enriching, and immersive than ever before.

### ELEVATING THE RBG EXPERIENCE

One of the most exciting transformations has been within RBG Centre, where our indoor horticulture has been revitalized to create an engaging and ever-changing environment for our visitors. We've activated The Potting Bench, a hands-on, interactive space where guests can get their hands dirty, learn from experts, and experience horticulture up close. Our Breezeway—a beloved passageway—has been reimagined with seasonal floral displays, changing seven to nine times a year, bringing fresh colors and textures that reflect the beauty of each season.

### LAYING A STRONG FOUNDATION FOR THE FUTURE

Behind the scenes, we've been working just as diligently to ensure RBG is positioned for long-term success.

## 2024

Developed the campus plan, increased engagement with visitors by expanding and deepening the signature, culinary and cultural experiences in the areas of music, fall and winter events, planning for a floral showcase in 2025, introduced culinary dinners.

## 2023

Launched a re-imagined tea house restaurant, secured a multi-disciplinary design team to support the creation of a campus plan for the RBG Centre and Hendrie Park sites, launched the Tessitura point of sales and CRM system.

## 2022

Developed experience plans to help shape and prioritize projects and investments for the benefit of visitors.

Launched WinterTide and Rock Bistro to extend into shoulder season operations and increase connections to the Rock Garden.

## 2021

Introduced a rolling strategic plan to guide our priorities and decision-making.





In 2024, a major milestone was the renovation of the Mediterranean Garden, a project that has redefined this space for both daily visitors and signature events. This transformation has been felt in many ways, from enhancing the beauty of Holidays at RBG in December to laying the foundation for the Alice in Bloomland Floral Showcase in 2025. With every change, we are creating new ways for guests to connect with the wonders of the natural world.

### **BUILDING A SHOWCASE GARDEN, PIECE BY PIECE**

One of the most exciting aspects of our Master Plan is the transformation of Hendrie Park into a true showcase garden—a space that bursts with color, texture, and vibrancy throughout the seasons. This vision isn't something that happens overnight. Instead, we are carefully and thoughtfully crafting this space, piece by piece, ensuring that every addition contributes to a premier botanical experience.

A key project in this transformation is the relocation of the Iris and Peony Collections from Laking Garden to Hendrie Park. This move—backed by extensive research and planning—ensures that these stunning blooms will be displayed in a way that allows more visitors to enjoy their beauty. Their new home will provide the conditions they need to thrive while offering an unparalleled floral spectacle each spring.

But the evolution of Hendrie Park doesn't stop there. This garden is becoming a destination unto itself, offering a breathtaking journey through the seasons, from the delicate beauty of Cherry Blossoms in spring to the warm, golden hues of Chrysanthemums in autumn. Each step we take brings us closer to our vision of a garden that is not only a delight to visit but a true showcase of botanical excellence.

The numbers tell a powerful story—more and more people are experiencing RBG's beauty firsthand. For the first time in our history, garden visitation has grown from **367,000 to over 410,000**, a testament to the impact of these enhancements.

### **A FUTURE BLOOMING WITH POSSIBILITY**

As we reflect on the past four years, one thing is clear—Royal Botanical Gardens is thriving, and we are just getting started. Every project, every bloom, and every enhancement we make is driven by our passion for inspiring and educating visitors, fostering a deeper connection with nature, and ensuring that RBG remains a beacon of beauty, conservation, and cultural engagement.

None of this would be possible without you—our donors—who believe in our mission and share our vision for the future. Because of your generosity, RBG is blooming brighter than ever, and we can't wait to continue this journey with you.



# YOUR IMPACT ON HORTICULTURE

## YOUR GENEROSITY CONTINUES TO ENHANCE RBG'S GARDENS AND COLLECTIONS:

- The Julia Hunter Fund at London Community Foundation supported new Canadian-bred roses for the sustainable Rose Garden and citrus trees for the Mediterranean Garden.
- Longtime volunteer Jean Crowe helped fund RBG's stunning indoor horticulture displays, adding to the visitor experience.
- 263 new plant accessions were added, bringing the garden's total to 24,822 individual plants across 153 species.
- Over 10,000 plant records were updated in RBG's database, which now holds over 180,000 records.
- Three years of entomology research in the Rose Garden have yielded valuable data to support RBG's eco-friendly pest management practices.
- Collaborations with Harvard University's Arnold Arboretum, University of Guelph, and University of Toronto led to a published journal article on a rare Ontario hawthorn species.
- Our Interior Horticulturist trained with experts at the New York Botanical Garden, bringing new insights to RBG's Alice in Bloomland floral showcase in 2025.
- Major upgrades to the Mediterranean Garden greenhouse improved plant health and visitor enjoyment by allowing seasonal plant rotations.
- Significant arboriculture work was completed, including maintenance on 64 trees and the removal of 28 unsafe trees.
- Educational tours engaged horticulture students and professionals from institutions like Humber College and Niagara Parks School of Horticulture.
- The Iris Benchmarking Project documented 478 iris cultivars, improving collection management and earning RBG prestigious designations as a Historic Iris Preservation Society and Dwarf Iris Society display garden.
- Renovations to the Aldershot Escarpment Garden lower beds simplified maintenance while preserving its beauty.





## A SANCTUARY REIMAGINED

### The Transformation of the Mediterranean Garden

In a rapidly changing world, our visitors continue to gravitate to this space as a place for peace, reflection and inspiration when our outdoor gardens are dormant. Opened in 1986 with an elegant Breezeway entrance, this beloved Garden had become overgrown and was in need of rejuvenation. Thanks to the generosity of our donors and funders like the Julia Hunter Foundation, we were able to revitalize and transform the Garden into an evolving display of art, nature, and imagination.

The first steps included meticulous planning, replacing spent soil, and significant pruning to let in more sunlight to make room for new plants. Fans and misters were added to improve the ecosystem and provide conditions to grow more diverse plant collections. Now the greenhouse is once again fully automated and climate-controlled, allowing us to grow a more diverse selection of plants that add colour and interest throughout the year.

At the heart of this transformation are the newly added water features, designed to bring a sense of peace to the space. Visitors will continue to enjoy the rippling reflections of the koi pond and sitting on one of the inviting benches with a book in hand.

These changes have already had an impact on experiences like our Holiday event, where the Garden provided a lush green escape from the winter chill. Visitors enjoyed the twinkling lights, festive plant displays, and the scent of evergreens mingling with citrus blossoms.

Earlier this year, the Mediterranean Garden transformed again into a dreamlike escape for Alice in Bloomland. The new floral showcase was inspired by the whimsy and wonder of Lewis Carroll's classic tale and immersed visitors into a world where fantasy and flora intertwined.

The transformation of the Mediterranean Garden is a gift that will continue to evolve, offering beauty and respite to all who enter. We are grateful to the donors whose generosity has resulted in this reimagined space—where joy, creativity, and tranquillity can thrive for years to come.





## YOUR IMPACT ON NATURAL LANDS

### THANKS TO YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT, REMARKABLE PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE IN RESTORING AND PROTECTING OUR NATURAL LANDS:

- With the help of dedicated volunteers, 62,685 invasive shrubs and trees—across 24 species—were removed from RBG habitats, allowing native plants to thrive.
- 40 sites of invasive Phragmites (Giant Reed Grass) were eliminated from the marsh meadow in West Cootes Paradise, improving habitat for native species.
- 73 turtle nests were protected, leading to over 1,000 hatchlings, including endangered Blanding's turtles.
- As part of our RBG Turtle Recovery Program, we have released 184 head-started Blanding's turtles back into the marshes since 2015, greatly increasing the chances of their survival.
- Premier nature sanctuary gathering areas at Princess Point and Rock Chapel have been renovated for better accessibility, enhancing visitor experiences.
- A field at Rock Chapel was restored to its original wetland habitat, providing crucial homes for wildlife and reducing stormwater impact on Dundas.
- Genetic profiling of endangered species like Blanding's turtles, Red Mulberry, and American Chestnut is underway to inform future recovery efforts.
- After an intense July storm, a large-scale trail rebuild was required at the Arboretum. Your support ensured rapid restoration, while newly installed infiltration features at Churchill Park successfully protected paths and natural areas from erosion.



# PRESERVING NATURE'S LEGACY

## A Heartfelt Thank You to Our Donors

The early morning sun filters through towering trees, casting golden light on the well-worn trails of RBG. A gentle breeze carries the scent of wildflowers, while birds call out in a chorus of nature's song. These 27 kilometers of pathways are more than just trails—they are lifelines for physical and mental well-being, gateways to adventure, and sanctuaries for countless species that call our lands home.

Immersing yourself in nature reduces stress, lifts your mood, and fosters a deep sense of connection with the world around you. With over 750 native plant species and habitats for 277 migratory bird species, 37 mammals, and countless reptiles and amphibians, RBG's sanctuaries bring people face-to-face with Canada's rich biodiversity.

However, nature's delicate balance is increasingly under threat. Climate change, urbanization, and extreme weather events challenge the ecosystems we cherish. During the summer of 2024, heavy rains flooded our nature sanctuaries, damaging trails, overwhelming marshes, and impacting vital habitats. Yet, through conservation efforts, educational programs, and community

engagement, we remain steadfast in our dedication to protecting these precious landscapes.

As stewards of over 1,100 hectares of ecologically significant land, we work tirelessly to safeguard the diverse species that call RBG home. Your support has helped us maintain and preserve these extraordinary landscapes, ensuring they remain accessible and vibrant. Every step taken on an RBG trail, every moment of peace found in nature, and every species saved is made possible by your generosity.

More than just a network of paths, the trails of Royal Botanical Gardens are a living, breathing treasure—a place where nature and people thrive together. Step onto the trail, take a deep breath, and let the journey begin.

Thank you for being a vital part of our mission. Your contributions make a tangible impact, preserving these trails and the biodiversity they support.



### Recycled Christmas Trees Transform Cootes Paradise

RBG has been using donated Christmas trees in various marsh restoration projects supporting aquatic ecosystems. Since this project began ten years ago, over 175,000 trees have been strategically placed creating berms that encourage sediment to settle along the banks. As more trees are added, the riverbanks become more stable, supporting fish migration and creating essential habitats for fish, birds, reptiles, insects, turtles, and even mammals.

Thank you to everyone who has helped with this project. Not only those that have dropped off your trees, but also to those who have organized community pick-ups and businesses who have delivered by the truckload!





# BRINGING THE GARDENS TO LIFE THROUGH EVENTS

At Royal Botanical Gardens, our events are more than just gatherings—they are transformative experiences that connect audiences, engage our dedicated supporters, and bring our mission to life. Through music, seasonal celebrations, and immersive experiences, we inspire a love for nature, deepen environmental awareness, and create a sense of belonging. Thanks to the generosity of our donors and corporate supporters, we continue to expand our reach, welcome diverse communities, and ensure the Gardens remain a place of learning, connection, and discovery for all.

## WinterTide

Supported by The Shirley Jordan Performing Arts Fund

Our annual WinterTide music series transformed the Rock Garden's Great Room into an elegant jazz lounge, where 2,322 attendees enjoyed world-class live music, craft cocktails, and a seasonal French-inspired menu. Fire pits, illuminated pathways, and twinkling lights created a magical winter escape. In partnership with T.U. Jazz Fest, we showcased emerging musicians and award-winning artists, introducing new audiences to RBG while celebrating the arts in nature.

## Nature's Superheroes: Life at the Limits

This interactive winter exhibit immersed visitors in the wonders of evolution, showcasing nature's most extraordinary adaptations. Over 34,000 guests explored larger-than-life displays featuring species with incredible "superpowers" that help them survive extreme environments. This engaging, hands-on experience sparked curiosity and deepened appreciation for biodiversity and conservation.

## Summer Music in the Garden

Presented by incite Foundation for the Arts

From July to August, 2,745 music lovers gathered in Hendrie Park for four evenings of live performances by acclaimed artists, including Juno-nominated musicians. With blankets and chairs in tow, attendees enjoyed performances by Basia Bulat, The East Pointers, Great Lake Swimmers, and Sarah Harmer, all set against the stunning backdrop of our lush gardens.

## The Enchanted Garden

In mid-July, our youngest visitors stepped into a world of magic in the historic Rock Garden, where fairy tales came to life. Families explored hidden pathways, discovered fairies, elves, and gnomes, and embraced the whimsy of nature. Over 2,414 visitors experienced the enchantment of this unique and mystical garden.



## Under the Harvest Moon with Feist

Presented by incite Foundation for the Arts and supported by TD Bank

Celebrating the changing seasons, this sold-out concert brought 2,200 attendees together for an unforgettable evening with 14-time Juno Award-winning artist, Feist. Guests enjoyed the crisp autumn air, seasonal food and beverages, and a breathtaking musical performance in the heart of the Gardens.

## The Great Pumpkin Trail

Supported by TD Bank and IKEA

One of our most beloved annual traditions, The Great Pumpkin Trail welcomed a record-breaking 18,618 visitors over six nights in October. Guests followed the glowing path of hundreds of jack-o'-lanterns, enjoyed seasonal treats, and immersed themselves in the magic of autumn through themed entertainment, fog-filled gardens, and festive activities. Many attendees embraced the Halloween spirit with creative costumes, making this event a truly immersive experience.

## The Best of Second City

Supported by The Shirley Jordan Performing Arts Fund

Laughter filled the RBG Auditorium as over 300 guests enjoyed a night of world-class comedy from The Second City Touring Company. This evening of improv, sketches, and musical performances brought a fresh audience to RBG, proving that comedy and conservation can go hand in hand.

## Winter Wonders

Supported by TD Bank

The holiday season came alive with our signature Winter Wonders event, drawing 33,619 visitors from December to January. Hendrie Park transformed into a breathtaking winter wonderland, where guests strolled through dazzling light displays, enjoyed festive refreshments, and created cherished holiday memories with family and friends.

## Adult-Only “After Dark” Experiences

To engage a broader audience, many of our events feature exclusive 19+ After Dark evenings, blending live entertainment, signature cocktails, gourmet food, and interactive experiences. These unique offerings continue to attract new visitors and deepen our community's connection to the Gardens.

Every ticket purchased, every event attended, and every magical moment shared at RBG is made possible by the generosity of our donors. Your support allows us to curate exceptional experiences, introduce new audiences to nature, and ensure that the Gardens remain a vibrant, welcoming space for all. Thank you for helping us grow, connect, and inspire—one event at a time.





## MUSIC AT RBG

### Uniting Community in Nature's Embrace

In 2024, RBG transformed into a vibrant cultural hub, hosting a series of musical events that harmoniously blended melodies with the beauty of nature. These events, generously supported by the incite Foundation for the Arts, The Shirley Jordan Performing Arts Fund, and TD Bank, created unique experiences that brought the community together in the enchanting settings of Hendrie Park and the Rock Garden.

The Music in the Garden series featured eight unforgettable performances by acclaimed Canadian artists in Hendrie Park. Four of these concerts were hosted by RBG and graciously presented by the incite Foundation for the Arts, showcasing Basia Bulat, The East Pointers, Great Lake Swimmers, and Sarah Harmer. The remaining four award-winning performances—featuring Jesse Cook, Donovan Woods, Broken Social Scene, and Dwayne Gretzky—were presented in partnership with Noisemaker.

Families and friends spread out blankets under the open sky, sharing laughter and creating memories as melodies filled the air. The natural beauty of Hendrie Park provided a stunning backdrop, making each performance a truly immersive experience.

As summer gave way to autumn, the Under the Harvest Moon concert in Hendrie Park featured the renowned artist, Feist. The crisp fall evening saw the largest community crowd, 2,200 strong, come together once more, wrapped in cozy blankets — to enjoy soulful tunes amidst the garden's golden hues. The ambiance of Hendrie Park during this time offered a serene and intimate concert experience, deepening the connection between music, nature, and community.



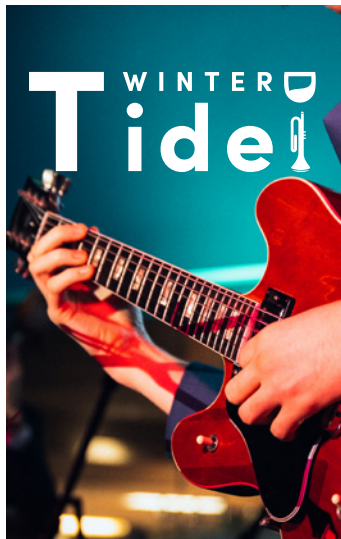


In the heart of winter, RBG's WinterTide series transformed the Rock Garden into an elegant indoor and outdoor jazz lounge. Adorned with glowing lights and warmed by fire pits, the garden became a haven where people gathered from their homes to enjoy live music. The event featured performances by emerging musicians and award-winning artists, curated in partnership with T.U. Jazz Fest. Attendees sipped on craft cocktails and savoured gourmet bites, finding warmth and camaraderie in the shared musical experience.

These musical events at RBG did more than entertain; they fostered a sense of community, drawing individuals together to celebrate the arts in a natural setting. The support from the incite Foundation for the Arts, The Shirley Jordan Performing Arts Fund, and TD Bank was instrumental in making these experiences possible, enriching the cultural fabric of our community. Their contributions ensured that music and nature could unite, offering solace, joy, and connection to all who attended.



## 2024 Performers at WinterTide + Music in the Garden Series



- Queen Kong
- Laila Biali
- Jonathan Nvita & The Alkebulan Sound
- TJ & The Crew
- Wanderer
- Luis Anselmi & Gratiud Band
- The Beelays
- John Amato Quartet
- El Ceibo
- Sammy Jackson Quartet
- Joshua Pascua
- Ori Dagan Quartet
- Ryan Gazzola Band
- Junestone



- Jesse Cook
- Basia Bulat
- Dwayne Gretzky
- Donovan Woods & Hayden
- The East Pointers
- Broken Social Scene
- Great Lake Swimmers
- Sarah Harmer
- Feist



## YOUR IMPACT ON EDUCATION

### YOUR SUPPORT IS INSPIRING THE NEXT GENERATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDS:

- RBG's Virtual Field Trip Programs received a Pinnacle Award from the Center for Interactive Learning and Collaboration for outstanding distance learning. This year, 5,657 students participated in 222 virtual school programs. This included four virtual presentations by staff as part of a mental health week education initiative.
- These virtual programs reach every continent except Antarctica and serve nearly 100 remote Indigenous communities in northern Canada, including 23 communities this year.
- 79,930 visitors engaged with interpretive programs, including guided tours, demonstrations, and exhibit discovery activities.
- School program participation surpassed pre-pandemic levels, with a record-breaking 24,054 students from 458 schools attending on-site educational programs.
- Thanks to donor-funded Green Angels subsidies, 1,734 students attended in-person programs and 902 students accessed virtual field trips, breaking financial barriers to environmental education.
- 2,865 campers enjoyed RBG's March Break and Summer Day Camps, with 44 campers receiving financial aid through the Green Angels Program.

Because of you, RBG continues to be a leader in conservation, science, horticulture, and education.

**Your generosity makes this vital work possible—thank you!**



# INVESTING IN THE LEADERS OF TOMORROW

At RBG, we believe in harnessing the power of young minds to shape the future. Through our summer student and internship programs, we provide hands-on experience, expert mentorship, and invaluable career-building opportunities. Students gain practical skills, expand their professional networks, and develop confidence in their chosen fields, all while contributing to RBG's mission.

These opportunities are partially supported through the generosity of government partners, but a significant gap remains. Donors and corporate partners help bridge this gap. Fidelity Canada supported the 2024 RBG Intern Program, enabling the training of five interns in Aquatic Ecology, Terrestrial Ecology, Species at Risk, and Finance.

Beyond internships, generous support from organizations like the Hamilton-Oshawa Port Authority (HOPA) has enabled RBG to offer summer student positions in the areas of gardening, visitor services, summer camps, entomology, and ecological restoration. These roles provide students with real-world experience while advancing RBG's mission.



## DECLAN INGRIM-WALSH

Finance Intern

*"My internship in RBG's finance department allowed me to work through an entire one-year accounting cycle, giving me a deep understanding of financial processes in a major organization. I've gained confidence in my career path, built valuable connections, and secured a strong foundation for my future."*



## RICKY LUONG

Aquatic Restoration Summer Student

*"Working in the marsh every day was an unforgettable experience, and a way to learn hands-on restoration techniques and conservation practices. Engaging with volunteers and visitors to promote conservation efforts in Cootes Paradise and at the Fishway was the best part of my job. This experience has solidified my passion for environmental restoration."*



## GENNA SAUNDERS

Terrestrial Intern

*"Over the past year I have learned about ecosystem dynamics and interacted with various plants, reptiles, amphibians and fish, many of which were species-at-risk. Working across RBG's nature sanctuaries, I have done breeding bird surveys, grassland/forest monitoring, butterfly surveys and analyzed the collected data. The RBG team has given me the knowledge and skills to move forward in the conservation field."*

Our ability to mentor and empower the next generation of environmental leaders depends on the generosity of donors like you. Your support allows us to create these life-changing experiences, ensuring young professionals gain the skills and confidence they need to make a difference. Together, we are shaping the future—one student at a time.





## A GIFT THAT INSPIRES

### Helping More People Experience RBG

In 2024, the RBG Green Angels Subsidy Program received a remarkable boost from longtime members and dedicated supporters, Suzanne and Rick Craven. Their generous gift ensures that more children and families—regardless of financial barriers—can discover the wonders of RBG.

For Suzanne, a deep connection to nature has been a lifelong journey. As an Anglican priest in Burlington and Oakville for the past 25 years, she sees the natural world as a place of spiritual renewal. Her love of gardening was nurtured in childhood by her family, who devoted themselves to growing vegetables, fruits, and flowers. She also has a special bond with RBG, shaped by fond memories of childhood adventures in the Rock Garden and strengthened through family friends, including Dr. Leslie Laking, RBG's first Director. Later, as a mother, Suzanne enjoyed hours of strolling through the Gardens with her baby daughter Jenny. This must have had a positive effect on Jenny's life, as she worked at RBG in her teens and was married here.

Rick's connection to RBG came later in life. As a Halton Regional Councillor, he served on the RBG Board from 2004 to 2010. During that time, he developed a deep appreciation for RBG's vital role in environmental conservation and education. One of his proudest moments was seeing the construction of the Camilla and Peter Daglish Atrium, designed to meet the highest environmental standards. He also became passionate about RBG's children's programs, recognizing their role in shaping the next generation of environmental stewards.

Now proud grandparents, Suzanne and Rick delight in sharing RBG with their grandchildren. "They love the Gardens, no matter the season!" Suzanne says. "From the interactive exhibits and enchanting model trains to Arboretum adventures and making friends with the fish in the Mediterranean Garden pond—every visit is magical." This year, their oldest grandson will attend March Break and Summer Camp for the first time, a milestone that fills them with joy.

# Green Angels

Suzanne and Rick's decision to support the Green Angels Subsidy Program was rooted in their belief that nature should be accessible to all. They were thrilled to learn that this initiative now reaches beyond children and school groups, offering financial assistance for families, adults, and seniors. By providing admission passes, school programming and transportation support, and nature-based experiences for those facing financial hardship, Green Angels is opening doors for many who might not otherwise experience RBG's beauty and educational programs.

"We believe there's no greater gift than helping children understand and cherish the natural world," Suzanne shares. Rick adds, "It's essential to foster a love of nature early, so children grow up wanting to protect it. Supporting Green Angels ensures that more young people can experience RBG's magic—and that the Gardens will continue to thrive for future generations."

Suzanne and Rick hope their story inspires others to give. Their gift is not just about financial support—it's about planting seeds of curiosity, wonder, and conservation. Thanks to donors like them, people of all ages will have the opportunity to fall in love with the natural world and carry that passion forward for years to come.

If you'd like to join Suzanne and Rick in making a difference, consider supporting the Green Angels Subsidy Program today. Together, we can ensure that everyone, regardless of their financial situation, has the chance to experience the transformative power of nature at RBG.



## 1,631

Students Attended  
On-site Field Trips



## 902

Virtual Field Trip  
Opportunities to Students



## 44

Campers at RBG Day Camps



## 418

Child, Youth, Adult, Senior &  
Family Program Experiences



## 513

Admission Passes



## 913

Special Event Tickets





# YOUR IMPACT ON SCIENCE

## YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS ARE ADVANCING CRITICAL RESEARCH AND CONSERVATION INITIATIVES:

- 1,881 new Herbarium specimens were catalogued, adding to the 30,000 now accessible online through the Consortium of Northeastern Herbaria web portal.
- RBG's Herbarium team conducted wetland vegetation surveys to support the Hamilton Harbour Remedial Action Plan.
- Researchers studied invasive Magnolia species and worked with the University of Lethbridge to inventory endangered Wood Poppies at RBG.
- RBG staff contributed research and expertise in cultural heritage and archaeology, helping shape conservation planning.
- External researchers conducted seven projects at RBG, covering topics from butterfly populations to pollution monitoring.
- Educational outreach included 10 presentations, guided walks, and expert talks on botany, conservation, and astronomy, reaching diverse audiences.
- Media appearances raised awareness of birdwatching, invasive species management, and habitat restoration.
- In April, 800 attendees joined Dr. David Galbraith for an RBG-hosted live solar eclipse experience at the Arboretum.





## PRESERVING FOR THE FUTURE

### Horticulture's Iris Benchmarking Project

In 1947, the Iris Collection at Laking Garden became RBG's first major herbaceous collection. True to the Greek translation of iris—"rainbow"—the garden showcased a spectrum of cultivars, including award-winning bearded irises and hundreds of rare varieties. Over the decades, it grew to 1,120 plants through generous donations, yet had not undergone a full evaluation in years.

With RBG's Master Plan calling for the relocation of the collection to Hendrie Park—designed to better protect the plants and elevate the new showcase garden—came an opportunity to benchmark the collection, identify significant cultivars for preservation, and train a new expert in plant curation.

Recognizing the urgency and scope of the work, the Horticulture Department sought additional support. That's when the TAKLA Foundation stepped in. With a commitment to historic plant collections, rare species, and future horticulturists, the family-run foundation funded a curatorial assistant position for 18 months to assess the collection.

Gianna Bazinet—a graduate of the University of Guelph and University College Dublin—was selected to lead the project. Her work included plant surveys, a comprehensive photo library, integration of historic and new records, and partnerships with leading iris organizations.

Her research uncovered extraordinary findings, including a significant number of rare and historic cultivars, leading to RBG's new Preservation Priority System. Gianna's analysis revealed that 33% of the collection requires critical or high-priority conservation, sparking interest from partners like the Historic Iris Preservation Society and the American Iris Society.

The project has reinforced RBG's leadership in botanical preservation and its advancement toward becoming a Centre of Excellence in iris collection. It also strengthens RBG's role as a steward of Canada's horticultural heritage.

Gianna reflects: "I'm grateful to the TAKLA Foundation and RBG. This experience opened professional doors and allowed me to apply my skills to meaningful preservation work. I'm thrilled to continue this work as RBG's new Plant Records and Curation staff member."

Lynn Smith, a Director of the TAKLA Foundation shares her enthusiasm for the project: *"We are delighted to support such vital work at RBG. The benchmarking of this historic iris collection is not just about preserving plants—it's about safeguarding horticultural history for future generations. Knowing that our funding has helped train a new expert and that Gianna will continue her work at RBG is truly rewarding."*

Thanks to visionary donors like the TAKLA Foundation, RBG continues to lead in plant conservation and education.

# THANKING OUR CORPORATE VOLUNTEERS

At RBG, we collaborate with corporations in various ways to build strong, long-lasting partnerships. Our goal is to help businesses expand their reach and enhance brand awareness, all while generating essential funds to support RBG programs that positively impact our community and the natural world.

One of the ways that many corporate groups partner with RBG is through team building volunteer projects. RBG staff work with organizations to find a project and design a day that meets the unique needs of each team. In 2024, teams joined us in planting our Children's Vegetable Garden, harvesting produce in Hendrie Park, carving pumpkins for our displays, removing invasive plants from our nature sanctuaries, and planting native trees and shrubs in our natural lands.

In 2024, RBG was fortunate to have an enthusiastic team from Dillon Consulting continue their support of our Children's Vegetable Garden and Veggie Village in Hendrie Park. Dillon staff tell us they have "enjoyed volunteering in the gardens of RBG every autumn since 2022. Our volunteers typically spend an afternoon or morning harvesting vegetables to be donated to local food banks, aligning RBG's environmental stewardship programs with Dillon's corporate sustainability goals for combating food scarcity in the community". RBG is so grateful to have this partnership with an organization that has shown itself to be so community minded.

Grantek is another company that we look forward to hosting each year — and often they come twice! The team at Grantek has found their passion in our nature sanctuaries working over the years to preserve, project, and plant native species on our South Shore. Our terrestrial ecologists sing their praises and often save coveted projects for their experienced hands.



THANK YOU  
TO THE **97** CORPORATE  
VOLUNTEERS

Who helped us improve our

**GARDENS &  
Nature Sanctuaries**

through their **285** Hours  
OF VOLUNTEER SUPPORT



GRANTEK



Applus+ NRAY

VicWest Building Products



## Recognizing an Exceptional Volunteer – Tiago

Tiago, originally from Montreal, graduated from college there before moving to Ontario in the 1980s when his company transferred its head office to Burlington. He's been a member of our community ever since.

With a young family, Tiago and his wife often brought their kids to RBG. In fact, he can still fondly recall them talking about the experience! Tiago and his wife would occasionally visit on their own too; RBG was a place that brought happiness to his whole family. Though gardens, plants, and trees weren't initially Tiago's interest, that has certainly changed over time—he now loves being surrounded by them.

As he neared retirement, Tiago knew volunteering would be an important part of this new chapter in life. While he had volunteered with other organizations during his career, he was eager to find something new. After seeing an opportunity online, Tiago decided to give RBG a try and it didn't take long for him to realize that it was the perfect fit. RBG's values and passions aligned with his own, and it quickly became more than just a way to keep busy—it was a place with a vision that he truly believed in and where he could feel proud of the positive impact he makes.

A volunteer, Tiago assists in a wide variety of ways, but his favourite roles are when he has the opportunity to work with the public. Whether it's greeting visitors, answering questions, or assisting with children's programs, Tiago looks forward to sharing his love for RBG every chance he gets. Tiago believes that volunteering at RBG gives him a sense of purpose and fulfillment that provides him with new skills and friendships all the while helping him to stay active in the outdoors.

In addition to his warmth and professionalism, Tiago brings innovation, flexibility and compassion to our team. He is deeply respected by all his colleagues and has given over 730 hours of service in the last year alone! All these reasons made Tiago the perfect choice for RBG's Volunteer Rookie of the Year award.

At RBG we are deeply grateful to be able to work alongside a devoted, knowledgeable, and generous group of volunteers, full of wonderful people like Tiago.



**667**  
Volunteers

On over  
**40**  
teams

Provided  
**44,846**  
total hours of support

# ACCESSIBILITY FOR ALL

## Universal Washroom

Thanks to the generous support of the Ontario Trillium Foundation, funded by the Government of Ontario, Royal Botanical Gardens has taken an important step toward greater inclusivity. With a Capital Grant, we transformed an underutilized coat room into a fully accessible, all-gender universal washroom on the first floor of RBG's Main Centre—ensuring a more welcoming and accommodating environment for all.

This new facility directly enhances the experience of visitors with mobility challenges, caregivers assisting dependents, and parents with young children. It provides a safe and dignified space for those who require additional support, reinforcing RBG's commitment to accessibility for everyone.

Key features of the washroom include automatic doors, ample space for mobility device navigation, and an adult change table—critical elements that allow more people to comfortably enjoy their time at RBG. This investment is not just about infrastructure; it's about respect, inclusion, and ensuring that every visitor feels valued and supported.

We are deeply grateful to the Ontario Trillium Foundation and the Government of Ontario for making this project possible. Their support is helping us break down barriers, improve accessibility, and create a more inclusive space where all members of our community can connect with nature and one another.



Project supported by



An agency of the Government of Ontario  
Un organisme du gouvernement de l'Ontario





# EXPANDING RBG'S FUTURE

## A Strategic Land Acquisition for Conservation & Growth

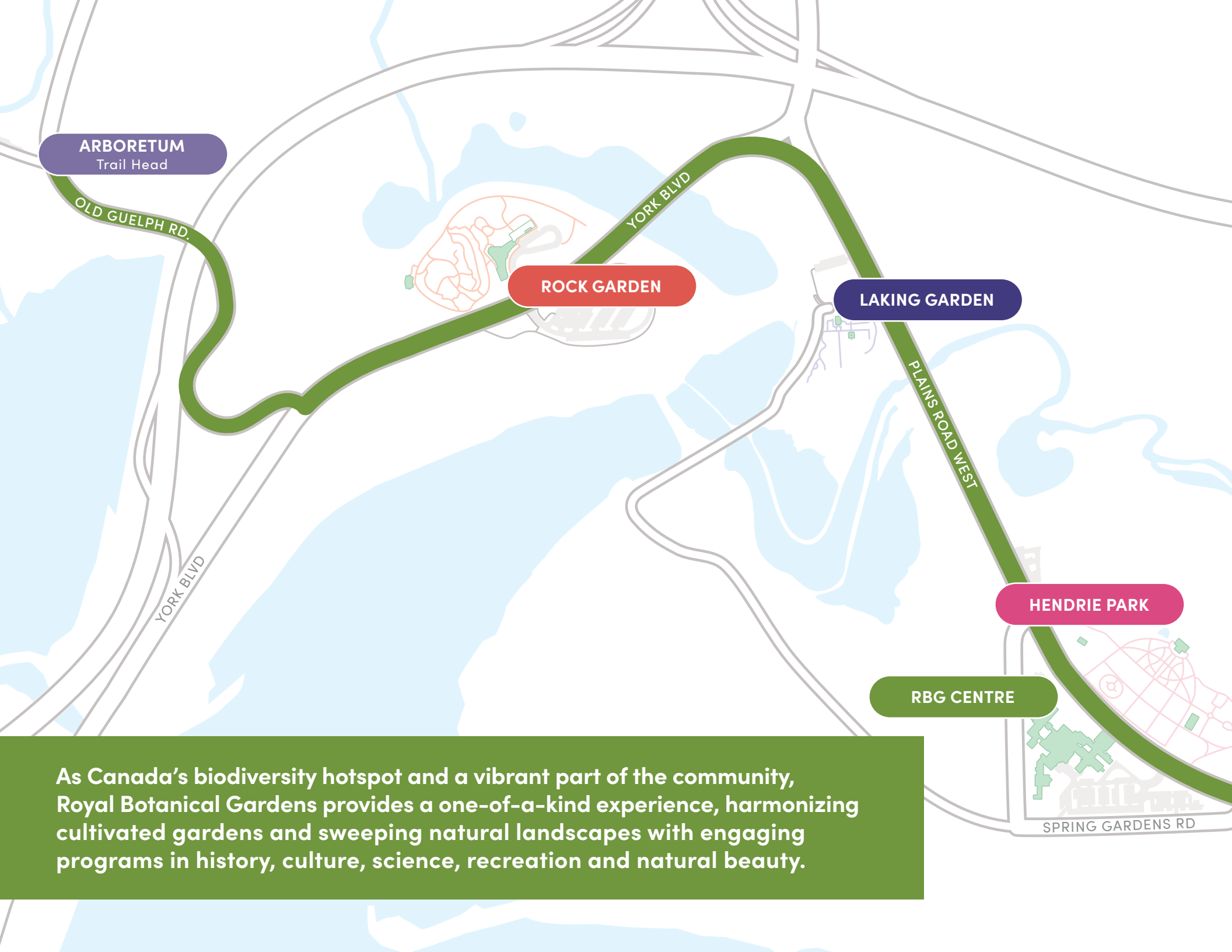
Through the generosity of our donors, Royal Botanical Gardens has taken a significant step forward in our Master Plan growth strategy with the strategic acquisition of a key parcel of land along Mitchell's Field in Hendrie Park. This acquisition is more than just an expansion—it's a thoughtful investment in the future of RBG, improving access, sustainability, and our ability to engage visitors in new and exciting ways.

For years, navigating vehicle access to Hendrie Park posed logistical challenges. Now, with this new property, we can create a safer, more direct route for service and emergency vehicles, enhancing operations without disrupting the visitor experience. This improvement aligns with our long-term vision of ensuring a seamless and sustainable flow of movement throughout RBG's landscapes.

Beyond infrastructure, this acquisition strengthens our conservation efforts. A portion of the land will be transformed into a dedicated nesting ground for native turtle species, whose habitats are increasingly threatened. By designating this space for nesting, we are providing a protected environment that enhances their survival while also supporting the broader wetland ecosystem and other wildlife species that rely on these natural habitats.

In addition to the environmental and operational benefits, this property includes a house that will serve multiple functions to support RBG's growth. In the interim, it will be used to support back of house operations for Hendrie Park and in the long term, it will help to support the implementation of key Master Plan activities and initiatives. As we move forward with Master Planning, this area can serve as an interim office or meeting space while work is underway at RBG Centre and it can serve as a construction staging zone for projects and initiatives in Hendrie Park which will help to minimize disruptions, where possible, for visitors.

Thanks to our donors, this purchase is a powerful example of how strategic growth and conservation go hand in hand, securing RBG's legacy for generations to come.



As Canada's biodiversity hotspot and a vibrant part of the community, Royal Botanical Gardens provides a one-of-a-kind experience, harmonizing cultivated gardens and sweeping natural landscapes with engaging programs in history, culture, science, recreation and natural beauty.



## RBG Centre

RBG Centre, home to many special programs and events where you will find both indoor and outdoor displays, Shop at the Gardens gift shop and the Greenhouse Café, along with our administrative offices.

### THE BREEZEWAY

Peak Interest: All Year

From January to April, the Breezeway brightens winter with various spring-flowering shrubs and trees and a wide range of common and exotic bulbs that evoke a fragrant spring day. Our talented gardeners change the space with a variety of themes throughout the year, culminating in a holiday season show of poinsettia and winter greens.

### MEDITERRANEAN GARDEN

Peak Interest: All Year

The Mediterranean Garden rejuvenation project has flourished, transforming the space into a botanical dream with new plant arrivals that added depth and diversity to the collection. Step into the Mediterranean Greenhouse at the Royal Botanical Gardens, and you'll find yourself immersed in a world of beauty, tranquillity, and transformation. Originally opened in 1986 as a quiet conservatory, this beloved space has been revitalized into a breathtaking sanctuary—an evolving display of art, nature, and imagination. Through the changing seasons, it continues to inspire wonder and reflection.

## Hendrie Park

Hendrie Park, our largest cultivated garden area, offers something for everyone, showcasing the remarkable diversity of both plants and garden design. This vibrant space is home to the Dan Lawrie International Sculpture Collection, Morrison Woodland Garden, Scented and Healing Gardens, Helen M. Kippax Garden, Prehistoric Grove, Veggie Village, and the Tea House at the Turner Pavilion. Adding to its beauty, the sustainable Rose Garden presents a stunning display of cold-hardy roses and companion plants that provide seasonal interest throughout the year.

## Laking Garden

Set on a fertile terraced plain that was once a market garden, Laking Garden is home to RBG's herbaceous perennial collections. The belvedere at the end of the entrance path offers a panoramic view of the entire garden, especially spectacular in early to mid-June when our iris and peony collections shine. Take time to explore how early Ontario gardens mixed edible, medicinal and ornamental plants in the Heritage Garden.

## Rock Garden

Opened to visitors in 1932, the historic Rock Garden is considered the birthplace of Royal Botanical Gardens. Following a significant rejuvenation, the David Braley and Nancy Gordon Rock Garden reopened in 2016 to embrace sustainable trends in garden design and management while respecting the integrity of its heritage setting. Bold swaths of brilliant perennials provide sweeps of inspiring colour and texture throughout all seasons.

## Arboretum

RBG's Arboretum resembles an English landscape park rather than a traditional garden, offering a stunning display of trees and woody plants up close. Particularly beautiful in spring and fall, it features over 500 species and cultivars of lilacs, along with extensive collections of magnolias, crabapples, dogwood, redbud, and cherry trees, as well as other unique trees and shrubs. Visitors can explore nature trails that highlight native plants used by Indigenous peoples while enjoying breathtaking views of the shoreline and forests of Cootes Paradise.

### THE JOURNEY TO ANISHINAABE KNOWLEDGE

Peak interest: All year

Native plants provided Indigenous peoples with almost all of life's essentials. Starting in the Arboretum near the Nature Interpretive Centre, this new trail explores plants used by the Anishinaabe peoples, and their connections to culture, language, ecology and history.

Royal Botanical Gardens acknowledges the long history of First Nations and Métis People in the Province of Ontario and pays respect to the Six Nations of the Grand River Territory and the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, the holder of the Treaty with the Crown for these lands. The land we steward is within the traditional territories of the Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe, and Huron-Wendat Nations.





THANK YOU, FOR MAKING AN IMPACT



Royal  
Botanical  
Gardens  
CANADA

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