



CHICAGO BOTANIC GARDEN

Eileen Prendergast
Director of Education
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Good afternoon, my name is Eileen Prendergast and I'm the Director of Education at the Chicago Botanic Garden. I'm here to ask for your support of the Chicago Botanic Garden as part of the Forest Preserves Budget. This commitment allows the Garden to offer wonderful education programs for adults, students and families from throughout Cook County.

As our mission states, "we cultivate the power of plants to sustain and enrich life" and the Garden's education programs do just that by deepening the connection of the public to science and the natural world. The Garden engages visitors' senses, body, and mind through classes, workshops, experiences for families, teachers, students and learners of all ages – early childhood to adult. Numerous youth and family programs like Camp CBG, scouting, weekend family classes, nature nights, and story time, are a few examples of popular offerings. We also provide teacher and student programs that are exciting, innovative, standard-based educational experiences that leverage the Garden's natural and scientific resources. These learning opportunities provide school year and summer academic enrichment through school field trips, environmental science curricula, and citizen science programming.

In early September, we opened the seven-acre Regenstein Learning Campus which serves as the headquarters of our long serving Joseph Regenstein, Jr. School of the Chicago Botanic Garden. The Regenstein School annually offers 1,500 classes and programs to 125,000 people of all ages. The School offers plant based learning, along with an array of health and wellness activities, aimed at creating excitement and curiosity about the natural world. In addition, the School also offers nine certificate programs and professional development classes including Horticultural Therapy, Healthcare Garden Design, Professional Gardener, Photography and Botanical Art.

A unique feature of the new Campus is the Nature Play Garden with its water feature, boulders and logs to climb on, a willow tunnel to run through, and a series of undulating grass mounds for rolling and leaping. As studies have shown, outdoor play and exercise is very important for child development and adult wellness.

The Learning Campus also includes a new light-filled Learning Center, a 26,700 square foot, platinum LEED standard building. The Learning Center includes ten



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classrooms and a kitchen which provides space to explore healthy living through cooking classes that teach new skills, explore unique ingredients, and preserve the harvest.

With the opening of the campus, the Garden added a new nature preschool with both indoor and outdoor dedicated space. Collaborations with staff from Brookfield Zoo and the Forest Preserve, particularly from the Nature Centers, have contributed to the formation of this program and others that will bring nature into early childhood classrooms. As a mother and an educator, I'm honored to have led this effort and in particular I have been pleased to witness the growth of our young students' gross motor development that the nature preschool offers. It has been a joy to watch the students count drops of morning dew on fallen leaves and thrill in the success of working together to build a straw bale fort for imaginative play. In addition to creating our own nature preschool, we will continue to train and inspire teachers to include nature in their curriculum and develop new nature preschools locally and nationally.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak this afternoon and I am looking forward to growing these programs for all our learners – young and old. And I know we couldn't do this without the support and partnership of President Preckwinkle, the Forest Preserves Commissioners, and the Forest Preserves team led by Superintendent Randall.

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FALL 2016

Regenstein Learning Campus
Opening Celebration
September 10 & 11



CHICAGO BOTANIC GARDEN
Member Magazine and Program Guide

Students and teachers embrace the nature connection

The Joseph Regenstein Jr., School of the Chicago Botanic Garden allows learners of all ages to engage with nature, and each year more than 125,000 people participate in 1,500 programs, classes, and events.

For students and instructors, the Garden's 385 acres are a resource-rich natural laboratory that make the School's classes, family activities, camps, and certificate programs lively and fresh.

The array of plants available at the Garden makes learning about them much easier, according to instructor Mark Zampardo, who brings almost three decades of horticultural teaching experience to the Ornamental Plant Materials and Horticultural Therapy certificate programs.

"Not only do you have all of the plants that grow in the area, but we have little ones and full-size ones and lots of different varieties in between," he said. And because the Garden's plants are incorporated into landscape designs, "students get to see how a plant can be used and its relationship to other plants."

For Michael Kedzie, a Barrington High School science teacher, several factors prompted him to enroll in the Garden's classes, including the breadth of information he was able to bring back to his students. "Hands-on activities provided me with more lessons to bring into my classroom than any other professional development I have been a part of," Kedzie said. "My 11th- and 12th-grade students really got into examining different vegetables and using anatomical evidence to make a claim as to what plant part we actually eat: leaf, stem, flower, or root."

Garden instructor Toni Barnes-Wierig leads the Garden's family programs, camps, and birthday parties, creating play experience that immerse children in the nature all around the Garden. "It's really cool to see the kids getting excited about finding bugs on a bug hunt or learning about different birds or trees or plants," said Barnes-Wierig, who taught pre-K for eight years and has been at the Garden for nine.

Programs for children are "very hands-on and very age-appropriate," said Barnes-Wierig, who taught a Wildlife Wanderers class this summer. "So we learn about habitat. We're doing water sampling in different areas and measuring water temperature. And instead of saying, 'OK here's a pond, what lives there?', we're actually going into the water with boots and exploring."

Kate Hanson has been bringing her three daughters (ages 7, 5, and 3) to Little Diggers and Camp CBG since the oldest was barely 2. Little Diggers allows the children and caregiver to move at their own pace, "something that is rare

and very much appreciated in classes for preschool-aged children." After 15 to 20 minutes exploring stations, the children gather to talk about the day, followed often by a nature walk and time to plant a flower or vegetable to take home. "Our daughters not only enjoy the opportunity to plant something on their own, they also come home with a sense of responsibility to make sure their plants are watered and well cared for."

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— Michael Kedzie, teacher

The Garden's teaching team engages students who have "passion for the topics, industry, and the Garden itself," said Anne Roberts, president of Anne Roberts Gardens, Inc. and a student and instructor at the Garden. "I learned everything I needed to know to feel confident in my designs."

Jacqueline Willrich was drawn to the Botanical Arts certificate program "for the setting, the resources, and the many specimens available, as well as the variety of classes."

"I learned that patience and attention to details in an artwork was worth pursuing. Flowers and landscapes are so interesting that learning to paint them has increased my knowledge of botany and made me more aware of the beauty of nature."

And, she added, "I now feel I can call myself an artist."

Learn more

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