



San Francisco Botanical Garden Strategic Priorities for 2021-2022

In March 2019, San Francisco Botanical Garden board and staff members began a strategic planning process to produce a comprehensive 3-5 year plan in 2020. Through workshops, SWOT analysis, and benchmarking against leading botanical gardens, we made significant progress. **We adopted a new mission statement: San Francisco Botanical Garden connects people to plants, the planet, and each other.** Each department and program established ambitious goals for the next 3-5 years. We also identified the next major capital project after completing the new plant nursery – a renovation of the Children’s Garden. While the process to date has been productive and useful, both internal and external issues have caused us to pause on completing a comprehensive 5-year strategic plan at this time.

Internally, three key issues emerged that require more study, input, and analysis:

1. The need to develop a meaningful and effective approach to addressing justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI) at the Garden for our staff, volunteers, board, members, visitors, and program participants. Doing so will require some initial inquiry and data collection in order to set measurable goals. To that end, we started by establishing a JEDI subcommittee and have surveyed staff and board.
2. The need to develop a meaningful and effective approach to addressing climate change and making the Garden more environmentally sustainable and resilient, as well as educating visitors about these issues.
3. The need to have a bigger vision and right size our organization to achieve bigger impact, address expensive infrastructure improvements, increase financial sustainability, and enhance visitor/member experience. To that end, we are exploring a new partnership model – the Gardens of Golden Gate Park – combining the management of the Botanical Garden with the Japanese Tea Garden and Conservatory of Flowers.

Externally, the COVID-19 pandemic and related economic crisis has meant closing to the public for 11 weeks, cancelling our major events, laying off staff, and reducing our operating budget. We are currently operating on a significantly reduced staff and budget. Our top priority for 2021-2022 will be to respond creatively and flexibly to the community’s and gardens’ needs while looking forward beyond the crisis as we enhance our vital role as a world-class botanical institution.

At the end of this recovery and transition period, we will publish a 5-year comprehensive strategic plan for the Gardens of Golden Gate Park. The process that results in this plan will include robust stakeholder engagement and peer review. In the meantime, we will achieve the goals listed below.

Goals for 2021-2022

People

- Build back staff capacity, after pandemic-related layoffs, to deliver core programs and services.
- Take meaningful actions to ensure Garden visitors, volunteers, staff, board, and program participants reflect the cultural diversity of the San Francisco Bay Area.
- Continue to serve children/families in new and innovative ways during the pandemic-related changes at public schools.
- Provide more value and enhanced experiences for our members and volunteers.
- Engage more donors to support our recovery and the launch of Gardens of Golden Gate Park.

Plants

- Continue to develop formal and sophisticated partnerships with other institutions and public gardens to better develop, perpetuate, and interpret our living collection, and to advance global plant conservation efforts.
- Implement a peer reviewed collections policy and improved horticultural maintenance standards.
- Solidify systems and protocols for removals and plantings of accessions in the collections.
- Create a tree canopy succession plan, identify heritage trees for the Garden, and develop custom preservation plans for each.
- Develop a business, marketing, and volunteer engagement plan for the retail nursery program to restart when the new nursery is fully operational.

Place

- Construct a state-of-the-art nursery facility that sets the standard for nursery sanitation and best management practices.
- Take the next steps on the “Nature Exploration Zone” concept plan to prepare to launch a capital campaign to completely renovate the Children’s Garden.
- Develop an interpretive plan across the Gardens of Golden Gate Park.
- Finalize and implement a series of Garden standards that detail out maintenance and installation practices that cover planting beds, tree canopy, facilities, and turf management.
- Formalize the operating agreement for the Gardens of Golden Gate Park, with inter-departmental structures across all three entities in several key functional areas.
- Ensure that the Maxwell-Hanrahan Endowed Fund is fully invested, managed, and producing gains capable of supporting garden operations at industry-standard rates.

Planet

- Establish a Climate and Environmental Sustainability subcommittee to develop relevant components of a comprehensive strategic plan.
- Identify opportunities to partner with organizations that work to re-grow, repair, and restore degraded plant communities that are represented in our living collection.
- Train field staff in biodiversity, sustainable landscape and maintenance practices, and Bay Friendly best practices (included in Recreation and Parks strategic plan).
- Continue transitioning to electric over fossil fuel powered equipment.
- Green our offices and events through sustainable purchasing and practices.
- Roll out digital, paper-free membership and make most donor/member acknowledgements/communications paperless.