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Nature folklore comes to life with addition of new garden area featuring artist Thomas Dambo's colossal troll at Huntsville Botanical Garden

HUNTSVILLE, Ala. (May 7, 2024) – In the heart of Huntsville Botanical Garden (HBG), a new magical realm is taking shape—tentatively named the Mother Earth Troll Garden. Opening in Spring 2025, this innovative space is a fusion of art, nature, and fantasy, crafted to transport visitors into a world where mythical creatures and earth's beauty coexist in harmony.

"We're creating an experience unique to Huntsville," said HBG CEO Susan Wagner. "Nothing like the Mother Earth Troll Garden exists anywhere else in the region."

The centerpiece of the Mother Earth Troll Garden is a 20-foot-tall troll, seated in a lotus pose, created by Thomas Dambo. A world-renowned artist known for his larger-than-life recycled troll sculptures scattered across the world, Dambo hails from Denmark and brings life to folklore through his trolls, creatures born from recycled materials that blend seamlessly into the landscape.

His approach is not merely artistic but narratively rich—each troll he creates is accompanied by a story, a name, and a poem that echoes the spirit of the creature and its surroundings. In Dambo's world, the trolls are the heroes of the Earth, here to protect nature from the wayward activities of humans.

"I came up with this concept in 2018, and ever since then, I have been looking for a partner who could see the potential in the idea and trust my vision for it. I recently reconnected with Sue Wagner whom I had met when I made my blockbuster exhibition Troll Hunt in Chicago at the Morton Arboretum and she invited me to Huntsville Botanical Garden," said Dambo. "I am thrilled to finally get to roll it out with somebody who trusts me to spend the full year it would take to have the concept and plants grow and I will come back in 2025 to complete one of my dream projects."

In contrast to his traveling troll exhibits like the ones held recently at Atlanta Botanical Garden and Cheekwood Estate and Gardens in Nashville, this will be a permanent feature opening in Spring 2025 at Huntsville Botanical Garden.

“The Mother Earth Troll and maze is an entire permanent garden landscape,” said Wagner. “It is one of the first gardens called out in the Garden’s Master Site Plan.”

The Mother Earth Troll Garden is more than just a home to one of Dambo’s creations. It’s a living, breathing piece of art. The troll (to be named by Dambo) sits inside a maze made of plant materials. This maze will eventually be the troll’s hair (made of plant materials) cascading down. The preservation of existing trees and the thoughtful addition of new plant species enhance the garden’s canopy, creating a tapestry of green that supports local biodiversity and offers visitors shade and beauty.

The garden’s design also features innovative artistic elements integrated into the maze structure, intended to evolve into living features as plants grow through it over the years. A throne, crawl-through tunnels, a hidden hut, a swing and more invite visitors of all ages to engage in nature play, interacting with each other and the natural elements of the maze in ways as varied as the people who visit.

Construction on the maze began in February 2024 when Dambo’s team from Denmark joined HBG staff and volunteers to transform the space. Phased plantings will continue in that area through spring 2025, ensuring seasonal interest throughout the year. The troll will be installed in early spring 2025, and the area will open to the public shortly thereafter.

Elements like the tree and rock donations from local contractors and partnerships with tree companies underline the community’s involvement and the cyclical nature of life—the old giving way to the new, fostering growth and sustainability. These elements are not just decorative but are integral to Dambo and HBG’s shared ecological narrative, emphasizing the role of reuse and renewal in conservation.

For more information about Thomas Dambo, visit thomasdambo.com. If you or your organization would like to contribute to the funding of the Mother Earth Troll Garden, please contact development@hsvbg.org.

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About Huntsville Botanical Garden

Huntsville Botanical Garden is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that exists to connect people to plants in order to support a healthier quality of life for the region. Open year-round, the Garden contains diverse ecosystems to explore within its 118 acres. From grassy meadows to woodland paths, aquatic habitats to stunning floral collections, the Garden invites guests of all ages to discover the beauty and wonder of the natural environment. For more information, visit hsvbg.org.

About Thomas Dambo

Thomas Dambo’s magical troll universe has 127 trolls in 17 countries worldwide, all made from recycled materials. Dambo’s awe-inspiring fairytales and sculptures captivate an audience, young and old who travel the globe hunting for the hidden giants. Huntsville Botanical Garden will be debuting one of Thomas Dambo’s world-renowned trolls in 2025.