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### **Huntsville Botanical Garden launches Youth Volunteer Program to provide hands-on experience in ‘green jobs’**

HUNTSVILLE, Ala. (Feb. 9, 2021) – The [Huntsville Botanical Garden](#) announced today the launch of a Youth Volunteer Program that engages teenagers in hands-on work in horticulture, environmental education and plant conservation at the Garden. During the summer of 2021, participants will gain real-world experience under the mentorship of STEM professionals, allowing them to cultivate a personal connection to the environment and explore careers in the green sector.

“The Youth Volunteer Program will serve as a catalyst, a starting point for the environmentalists, horticulturalists and plant scientists of the future,” said Sue Wagner, chief executive officer of the Garden. “Someday, these young participants will be the ones to take care of the green spaces in our community and beyond, and it is up to us to equip them with the knowledge, skills and passion they need to succeed.”

According to a [2020 report](#) from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, only an estimated 61 percent of agriculture- and horticulture-related jobs will be filled by qualified college graduates in the next five years. Through the Youth Volunteer Program, the Garden seeks to address this labor gap by helping introduce teens to “green jobs” and inspiring in them an interest in plant science.

“Many young people are unaware of the diverse career opportunities available to them in the green sector, from horticulture and agriculture to plant genomics and sustainability. If we take action today to introduce young people to the applications of STEM and spark their passion for plants, we can help ensure a healthier community and world tomorrow,” said Wagner.

Program participants will complete a minimum of 30 hours of volunteer service on site at the Garden in June and July. Working directly with expert members of the Garden’s staff, the young volunteers will gain firsthand experience in a variety of outdoor jobs with task assignments that preference their personal areas of interest. Tasks may include planting and watering in the greenhouse, completing horticulture maintenance in the Garden, supporting plant conservation research projects, assisting with summer science camp activities and more.

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Throughout the program, participants will also have the opportunity to meet other local professionals in the green sector during periodic career presentations, and they will be encouraged to promote environmental sustainability by applying what they learn to take action in their own homes.

“This program allows young people to dive in and get their hands dirty, engaging with the work of the Garden in an authentic and meaningful way,” said Misty Hertzog, manager of youth programming at the Garden. “What we do today has the potential to spark passion in a young volunteer that could carry them through the rest of their life.”

The Garden is currently accepting applications for the Youth Volunteer Program until Mar. 22, 2021. Applicants must be between the ages of 13 and 18. More information about the Youth Volunteer Program, including instructions for application, can be found at [hsvbg.org/youth-volunteer-program/](https://hsvbg.org/youth-volunteer-program/).

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### **About the Huntsville Botanical Garden**

The 112-acre Huntsville Botanical Garden is open year-round and contains a diverse ecosystem of meadows, upland and bottomland forest, and wetlands, as well as a variety of specialty gardens and native plant collections. The Mathews Nature Trail contains the largest accredited trillium collection in the U.S., and the Anderson Education Center is home to the nation’s largest open-air butterfly house. The Native Plants Teaching Garden is a public space that highlights the way local plants, soil, pollinators, and birds create distinct communities and how they interact to form a diverse, sustainable, and attractive landscape. A 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, the Garden is a member of the American Public Gardens Association, the North American Plant Collections Consortium, and the American Horticultural Society, as well as an ArbNet-accredited arboretum. For more information, visit [www.hsvbg.org](http://www.hsvbg.org).