



## MEDIA CONTACT

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Garden coalition provides professional development program for Alabama STEM educators** *Scholarship for 'Cultivate' program offers affordable option for new initiative*

HUNTSVILLE, Ala. (May 8, 2023) – A new professional development opportunity is available for educators across the state who teach STEM as part of their curriculum. **Cultivate** is a program designed to help K-6 teachers grow their abilities and confidence to teach STEM lessons in the classroom.

Huntsville Botanical Garden (HBG), along with Birmingham Botanical Gardens (BBG) and Bellingrath Gardens and Home (BG&H) to launch the **Cultivate** program statewide after a successful pilot in the 2022-2023 academic year. Teachers who attend a **Cultivate** session experience rigorous, hands-on training from education experts from the gardens.

Ideas rooted in plant science for STEM lessons are presented and all activities are linked to the *Alabama Course of Study: Science* standards and learning progressions. In addition to new enthusiasm and confidence for teaching STEM lessons, participants leave with curriculum, a bin of STEM resources and a certificate for two CEU credit hours.

STEM education extends far beyond its acronym (science, technology, engineering and math). It is the basis for teaching children problem-solving and critical thinking skills that can help them be successful in future careers.

“Educators are expected to teach these very important logical thought processes to children as early as Kindergarten, but many find themselves without the training, resources or confidence to effectively teach those skills,” said HBG Chief Executive Officer Susan Wagner. “By attending a **Cultivate** session, they can bridge that gap and learn the concepts necessary to successfully teach lessons that help children develop mental processes they will need for future career and lifestyle opportunities.”

When Wagner presented the concept for **Cultivate** to Alabama State Senator Arthur Orr (R-District 3), he immediately recognized the need for this type of professional development for educators. As the Chair for the State Senate Budget Committee for Education, he was an early champion for securing state funding to help launch **Cultivate**.

“Better trained teachers mean better educated students,” said Sen. Orr. “I’m grateful for this coalition of gardens from across the state establishing the **Cultivate** program for our educators and I look forward to improved STEM outcomes in our classrooms.”

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Registration is open for summer **Cultivate** sessions that start in June. Those who teach Kindergarten through sixth grade in Alabama are eligible. Teachers are encouraged to complete a simple scholarship application to participate in the course for 90% off, or \$10.00.

For more information, available sessions and registration:

- Huntsville Botanical Garden: [hsvbg.org/professional-development](https://hsvbg.org/professional-development)
- Birmingham Botanical Gardens: [bbgardens.org](https://bbgardens.org)
- Bellingrath Gardens and Home: more information coming soon

“**Cultivate’s** expertise is top-notch, the lessons are relevant for teacher and student success, and you cannot beat the value for this kind of professional development,” said Rebecca Turk, director of Learning and Public Engagement at HBG. “The education staff at Huntsville Botanical Garden is honored to lead this STEM initiative and provide quality STEM-focused training for educators.”

Funding for **Cultivate** is provided by the State of Alabama Legislature with additional support from The Daniel Foundation of Alabama, BAE Systems, Toyota Motor Manufacturing of Alabama, and other philanthropic assistance.

For questions about the courses or assistance in registering, contact [kcolvin@hsvbg.org](mailto:kcolvin@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](https://hsvbg.org).