

Annual Report to the Fairchild Membership

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As members of Fairchild, you should be proud to know that this year, following last September's Hurricane Irma, we planted more than 1,500 new specimens in the Garden. This represents the largest single-year planting in our history. Of special note is the increase in species diversity in the Tropical Plant Conservatory and Rare Plant House, which have received such major plant introduction facelifts that the name "Rare Plant House" is now more accurate than ever. In fact, the plant diversity in the Conservatory has improved by a factor of 400%.

On any given day, you can see staff and volunteers planting first-of-their-kind specimens and celebrating this rich diversity with you, our members, in person or via our #PlantingMondays stories on Instagram.

Science Education Continues to Break Ground

Our science education program continues to thrive with exciting, innovative, and groundbreaking initiatives. The Fairchild Challenge, the umbrella program for our education initiatives, is the single largest botanical education program in the country. Your membership support helps ensure that nearly 300,000 students connect with botany in a serious and meaningful way: through our partnership with NASA to deliver "Growing Beyond Earth;" in the only botany magnet high school in the world, BioTECH @ Richmond Heights; in our mobile laboratory STEMLab, which visits schools in Miami-Dade County throughout the school year;

or at our new botany magnet elementary school, Pine Lake Elementary STEM: Botany & Zoology Magnet Program.

This year, we received our second NASA grant, through a highly competitive award process. The new funding will help us create the Growing Beyond Earth Innovation Studio, a workspace dedicated to the technology of growing food. It is set to open in 2019.

Education at Fairchild is a serious undertaking, underpinning everything we do. Every tool and all materials given to students are free, including all equipment for Growing Beyond Earth and The Million Orchid Project, together represented in more than 200 schools, as well as all training and support from our staff. And that's because of you, our supporters and members.

Conservation and Plant History

Our native plant conservation program continues to "Connect to Protect" by encouraging local citizens to grow native plants in their gardens and track each plant's progress. This citizen science program is free to all participating Connect to Protect Network members.

Our flagship native plant program, The Million Orchid Project, continues to thrive. Thus far, we've planted more than 150,000 orchids in Miami-Dade County—well on the way to our goal of 1 million—while participating with nearly two dozen local municipalities and neighborhoods and 100 schools in Miami-Dade County.



Student scientists participate in Growing Beyond Earth, our partnership program with NASA.

I've already mentioned the enormous undertaking in our horticulture with respect to the numbers of species planted this year. In addition, we are undertaking an overhaul of our plant database system so that we can bring you, our members, our plant history via our website and app.

New Exhibits and Features for 2019

Next year, you can expect to walk in a cloud forest when you visit Fairchild. Launching in June 2019 will be our new mist feature in the Rainforest, Sunken Garden and conservatories. The cooling effect of the dewy fog will create the ideal climate for our plants and for you, our members—and will allow us to grow plants from the entire tropical world, from those found at sea level to those found on montane summits. You can expect to see pitcher plants, *Cymbidium* orchids, rare aroids, and other plants so rare they've not been seen here before.

One of our most exciting new exhibits, set to officially open during our Orchid Festival in March 2019, is the National Orchid Garden. This incredible new Garden feature, already under development, will showcase hundreds of thousands of flamboyant and dramatic orchids in the Richard H. Simons Rainforest. These orchids will continue to bloom throughout the year—allowing you, our members and visitors, to experience the largest orchid and rainforest exhibit in the continental U.S. In addition,

we will plant 1 million native orchids in the Garden during the coming two years.

When you visit Fairchild, you will not only be in one of the world's most beautiful and species-diverse botanical gardens, you will also be in the home of the National Orchid Garden!

Gardens and healthy eating have a naturally symbiotic relationship in that both are crucial for our wellbeing. Come June 2019, we will have completed a new Culinary Garden. This new exhibit will honor Dr. David Fairchild's legacy of exploring the world for edible plants that are useful in the United States.

The Culinary Garden will be an outdoor exhibit, making it an ideal source of DIY ideas for many of our local members to take back to their own home gardens. Our goal is to encourage as many of you as possible to convert your backyards into productive food forests. It's an innovative twist on the concept of "community gardening"—our large, diverse member community will create edible gardens where they live. We will introduce new edible plants from some of the most remote reaches of the world for your home gardens. Stay tuned.

Infrastructure Improvements

Lastly, we have spent this past year focused on improving our infrastructure. For example, the 80-year-old Vine Pergola, destroyed after Hurricane Irma, has been fully repaired. Our volunteers have been hard at work planting new vines (many of them species new to our collections). Our lighting infrastructure has also been completely renovated, which means that when you visit the Garden at night, you'll enjoy its beautiful silhouettes and alluring ambers even more. Soon, we'll upgrade our visitor pathway.

Our Volunteers—A Community of Botanists and Gardeners

We speak so often of Dr. David Fairchild here at the Garden, in our meetings and in our strategy discussions, that he seems to be seated at the table. And it pleases me immensely to think that his and Col. Robert Montgomery's legacies continue to guide this institution. They do so particularly because they were volunteers who gave their

time generously and continuously for decades. It was their consistent guidance, along with that of other luminaries like Marjory Stoneman Douglas, that's ensured the Garden's stable and steady growth over these 80 years. And it's this legacy of volunteerism that is most critical to the ongoing operations of the Garden.

Each year, our volunteers donate tens of thousands of hours to the Garden, with this year's total hours hovering at nearly 65,000. We have almost 1,300 volunteers, of which nearly 850 donate more than 30 hours per year; and of those, nearly 600 contribute at least four hours each week. Even more finely, many of those volunteers contribute more than 300 hours each year!

What does this mean for our organization? It means that when you visit, you'll connect with our volunteers, who will share their passion and knowledge with you—and that many of the critical pivot points in our programs are managed and executed by volunteers. It also means that the total hours donated to Fairchild by our volunteers represent the equivalent of 32 full-time employees. And, lastly, it means that the volunteer-to-staff ratio is 15:1!

I can think of no greater way to honor our founders' principles of creating a community of botanists and gardeners than by pointing to the contributions of our volunteers.

Financially Solid

All great organizations require fiscal and management excellence. Fairchild's solid financial position is due in large measure to the organization's management practices and the prudent oversight of our board of trustees—who are also volunteers.

The Garden's most recent audited financial statements show assets of \$46 million, with approximately \$22 million in stocks and bonds. Most importantly, Fairchild carries no debt, and we draw approximately \$800,000 from our endowment for annual operations. The independent arbiter of not-for-profit organizations, Charity Navigator, has awarded Fairchild its highest rating of Four Stars for the past several years, as well as a perfect score in financial transparency. These exemplary results are based on our enduring pillars: a dedicated staff, committed volunteers, visionary trustees, and generous members and supporters.

We depend on your support to deliver all of these leading-edge education, horticulture, conservation, and community outreach programs that connect you with the Garden. Our strong financial position simply means that we're excellent stewards of your gifts and generosity; that your dollars go directly to support our programs.

But we need your support to continue to operate these programs successfully. The ongoing improvements, new programs and future exhibits I've mentioned here represent a necessary investment in our Garden of well over \$6 million.

This has been a remarkable year of transformation for Fairchild, and it will all culminate during our new event, The NightGarden: an enchanted, illuminated experience full of fantasy and wonderment that will take members and visitors through a lighted, walking journey of the Garden's mission, using some of the most innovative technology in the world of illumination. By creating a visual storytelling of our programmatic initiatives at night, we will share our mission and Dr. Fairchild's legacy with you, our members, and with the South Florida community.

As we look back on the last 80 years, we are so proud of the Garden's achievements; achievements that are only possible because of you, our members. And as we look forward to the next octogenarian milestone, we're confident that the seeds planted thus far will yield an even larger crop of gardeners, botanists, members, and volunteers who love nature. That's why we are so passionately committed to the future of plants and to connecting you with the Garden.

We are your garden; the place for you to bring your children and your friends. We are the place for you and your family to learn science and botany, and to enjoy the beauty of nature.

We are committed to you. Thank you for your support.

Warm regards,



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