

Longwood Gardens
Fellows Program

Workbook

Rooted in People

The Human Side of Public Gardens





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Welcome

Dig deeper into your gardens social sustainability journey using the following activities and worksheets that are designed to parallel the Guide to help your garden on its own social sustainability journey.

The 2024–2025 Longwood Fellows have outlined the current landscape of social sustainability in the broader field of public gardens within the partner Guide, noting each garden is unique in its needs and aspirations.

While the following sections may be filled out by an individual, assembling a team to engage in dialogue and exercises using the prompts and tools provided is recommended. Making this a collaborative process will build buy-in and shared accountability.

Social sustainability is relevant to all aspects of garden leadership and operations, and social sustainability work is most effective when shared by all departments. By forming a cross-departmental team, gardens will more easily embed a holistic approach to social sustainability and will likely achieve better results.

We invite you to take a deeper look at social sustainability initiatives in your garden. Begin your journey supported by the tips and guides that follow.



The partner Guide and additional resources can be accessed via this QR code or by visiting longwoodgardens.org/cohort-project/2025.

About This Workbook

This Workbook has been developed to bring renewed attention to social sustainability, help public garden leaders develop new social sustainability initiatives, and deepen their existing commitment to social sustainability principles and practices.

This Workbook is designed to be useful for gardens of any size and budget, encouraging participants to assess their current state, envision their desired future, and align operations with the evolving demands of a changing world. Recognizing that human and financial resources are often limiting factors for public garden initiatives, the tools in this workbook seek to help readers identify priorities and think creatively.

You Will Explore How To:

- Conduct an inventory of your existing resources and social sustainability initiatives to establish a starting point and future direction.
- Develop a social sustainability initiative using the planning tool.
- Build support for proposed new initiatives.



Establish Your Starting Point

To begin your exploration of social sustainability in your garden, it is important to understand how social sustainability may already be rooted in your garden's foundational principles: mission, vision, and values.

Tip: Root Social Sustainability in mission, vision, and values. It may be helpful to review initiatives in each of the five social sustainability attributes:

- **Health & Well-being**
- **Accessibility**
- **Sustainable Community Development**
- **Engagement, Outreach, & Education**
- **Employee Development, Diversity, & Inclusion**

Answer the following questions to establish the existing connections between social sustainability and your garden's mission, vision, and values.

How does social sustainability connect to your garden's mission?

How does social sustainability connect to your garden's vision?

How does social sustainability connect to your garden's values?

Inventory Your Efforts

Take stock of your garden's current social sustainability efforts to identify gaps and prioritize needs.

Tip: If you are doing this inventory with a team, it may be helpful to print out each category and allow team members to add their responses individually using sticky notes and review together. After everyone has made their contributions, discuss the reflection questions, identifying areas of consensus and disagreement.



Get Started

The table and reflection questions on the next page will help you assess your garden's existing social sustainability initiatives across the five social sustainability attributes. List any current initiatives under each category and indicate their phase of development. Some initiatives may fall under multiple attributes. Note any gaps or opportunities for future growth.

Reflection Questions

- In which social sustainability attribute is your garden currently focusing the most effort?
- In which social sustainability attribute do you see the most opportunity?
- Are most of your garden's social sustainability efforts focused internally or externally?
- Are certain teams/departments driving most of your current initiatives, or are they spread throughout the organization?
- Of the initiatives you have inventoried, which are a high priority based on projected impact and investment?
- Are there any initiatives that are no longer relevant?
- Is there an existing initiative you would like to develop further?
- Is there a new initiative you would like to develop?

Social Sustainability Effort Inventory

	Phases of Development			
Social Sustainability Attributes	Being Considered	A Documented Goal with an Action Plan	Implementation Underway	A Well-developed Initiative
Health & Well-being <i>e.g. flexible job design, well-being initiatives, mental health awareness training</i>				
Accessibility <i>e.g. accessible infrastructure, multilingual interpretation, sensory-friendly experiences</i>				
Sustainable Community Development <i>e.g. community programs, ethical sourcing, socially responsible investment</i>				
Engagement, Outreach, & Education <i>e.g. school programs, diverse cultural programs, co-created community programs</i>				
Employee Development, Diversity & Inclusion <i>e.g. professional development opportunities, diversity and inclusion programs, pay equity</i>				

Gather Input

To further clarify your garden's social sustainability strengths and opportunities, it may be helpful to assemble focus groups or host a community gathering to discuss social sustainability initiatives at your garden. These conversations could involve senior leadership, board members, full-time staff, part-time staff, volunteers, key partners, and community members. These conversations will add further dimensionality to your understanding of your garden community's needs and aspirations.

Tips for Facilitating Dialogue

- Clarify the purpose
- Ensure everyone feels welcome and secure in this space
- Ask open-ended questions
- Encourage everyone to speak
- Embrace silence to foster deeper thinking
- Hold space for constructive disagreement
- Explore complex thought where more than one truth is possible

Get Started

As you start to identify an area of social sustainability and you would like to explore it further, it may be helpful to share the definition of social sustainability and the five attributes as a jumping-off point.

Social Sustainability Definition

- Social sustainability focuses on supporting people's and communities' well-being and quality of life for present and future generations.
- In public horticulture, this means cultivating connections and creating inclusive spaces where people can explore, grow, and thrive together.

Five Social Sustainability Attributes

- **Health & Well-being**
- **Accessibility**
- **Sustainable Community Development**
- **Engagement, Outreach, & Education**
- **Employee Development, Diversity, & Inclusion**

Spark the Social Sustainability Discussion

	Questions Internally	Questions Externally
Defining Social Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – What role does social sustainability play in your life or work? – What social roles can a garden play? – How does social sustainability reinforce the core mission, vision, and values and guide our strategic direction? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – What role does social sustainability play in your garden community? – Imagine our community thriving socially— what does that look and feel like? – What social roles can a garden play?
Current Social Sustainability Efforts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – To what extent do our internal operations and policies support social sustainability? – How effectively do our programs support and promote social sustainability? – Who's part of our network now, and who should be? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – What garden practices are contributing to social needs right now? – Who do you notice taking part in our garden and programs, and who do you think we should reach out to? – How is our garden making a difference in the social sustainability of our community right now?
Key Needs and Emerging Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – What areas within our organization need more focus on social sustainability? – What steps can we take to meet these social sustainability needs and seize these opportunities? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Where are the gaps in social sustainability within our community? – What opportunities does the garden offer to strengthen social sustainability in our community?
Advancing Future Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Are there any new initiatives you'd like to create, or existing ones you'd like to expand? – How would our organization look and operate if we were effectively fostering social sustainability? – What kind of resources would help us move forward with these initiatives, and what innovative approaches can we take to create impact on a limited budget? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – What atmosphere or elements would you like to see and experience in the garden? – What positive transformations would happen in our community if we were effectively fostering social sustainability? – How can we creatively collaborate with others to achieve our shared goals?



Develop Your Initiative: The Big Idea

Now that you have established a starting point for your garden's social sustainability efforts, is there an initiative you would like to develop or expand?

[illegible]

Map Your Resources

Developing a new initiative can be daunting. It may feel like there are existing constraints that make dreaming big difficult. Before diving into planning a new initiative or further building upon an existing initiative, map your current resources to get a clearer idea of the assets you have to support your initiative. We often have more resources than we think. This exercise is designed to help you and your team think outside of the box to secure the resources you need to achieve your goals.

Tip: Don't get bogged down in particulars! This is a brainstorming exercise. List all of the resources you have—even if they seem silly or irrelevant. List all of the resources you think you might need—even if they feel difficult to secure.

Get Started

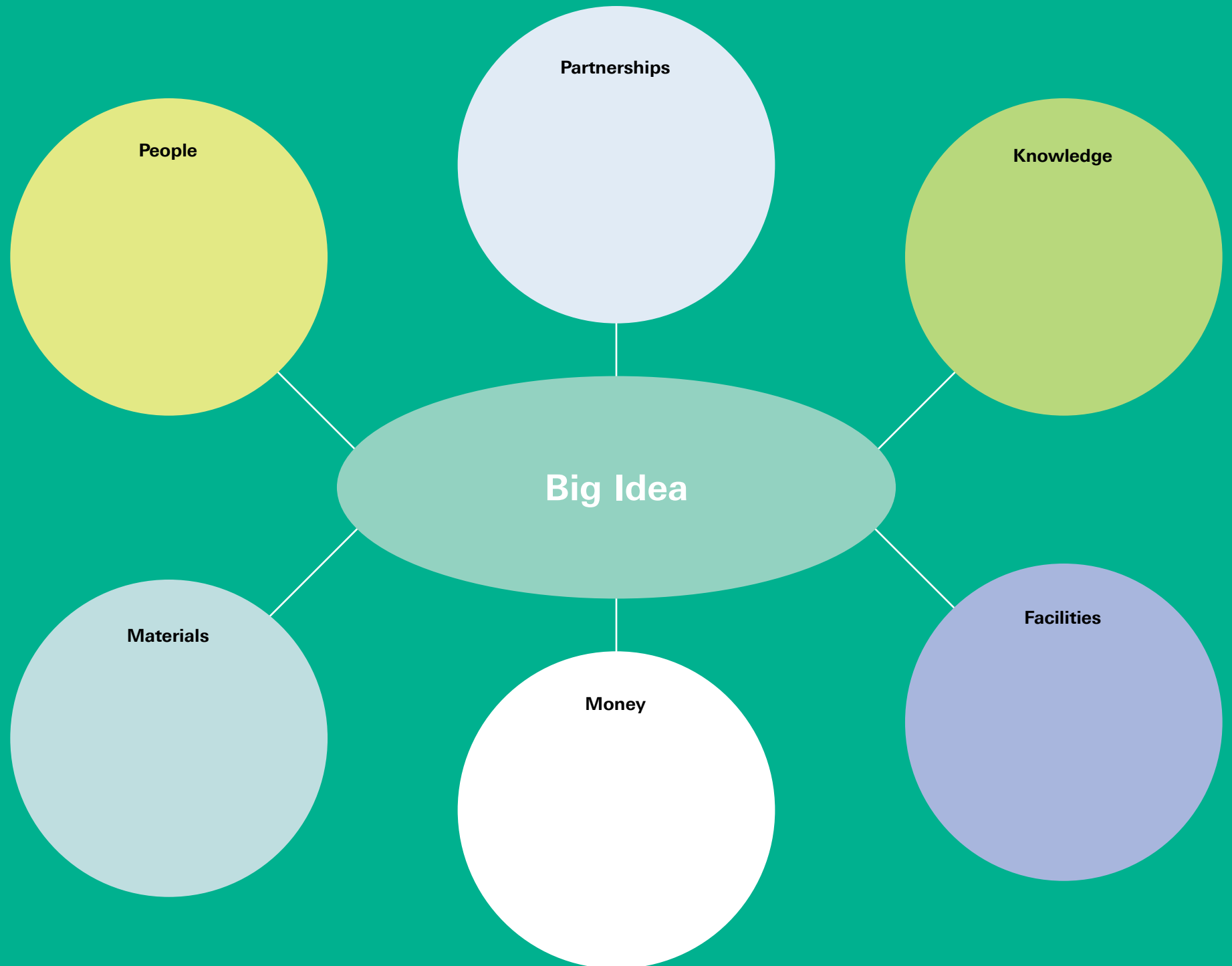
First, clarify your big idea:

Next, map all of the resources you already have or have access to that connect to this idea. Start with your big idea in the center and then add the following resource categories to guide your brainstorming: people, partnerships, knowledge, materials, money, and facilities.

Reflection Questions

- Where do we have the most resources?
- What resources do we already have that we could further leverage?
- What resources could we access through new partnerships?
- What critical resources are we missing?

For each gap that you have identified, brainstorm potential solutions. For example: We don't currently have expertise on the program topic we are interested in—we could partner with our local university to co-create a program.



Social Sustainability Planning Guide

Get Started

This framework will help you to both develop a road map for your initiative and communicate its value. The Social Sustainability Planning Tool found on page 17 is an easy-to-use framework to develop a plan for your social sustainability initiative. This tool encourages you to identify your initiative's desired outcomes, scope, rationale, required resources, goals and milestones, and key metrics. It will assist you in developing a communication strategy and strategy statement.

Tip: It is okay if your first draft is messy. Get your ideas on the page, take some time to reflect, and then start a new draft to refine your ideas.

Reflection Questions

- Did any questions come up that you want to explore further?
- Were there any boxes that were more challenging to fill out? Why? Who can assist you to do this?
- Did this exercise spark any new ideas or connections you want to capture?

Big Idea

Describe your big idea. What outcome do you want to achieve? And what action will get you there?

Scope & Logic

Outline your scope and logic for the initiative. Describe why this initiative is important and how it connects to larger institutional goals. Outline when and where it will happen and who will be involved.

Resources

List the resources you will need for this initiative. Write down the resources you already have as well as the resources you will need. Resources can be people, partnerships, knowledge, materials, money, and facilities.

Goals & Milestones

Define your main goal and the important milestones that will get you there. Include a time frame for achieving these milestones.

Key Metrics

Define the measurable outputs that will help you know this is a successful initiative. What key metrics will you measure? How will you measure them? And who will measure them?

Communication Strategy

Now that you have defined your initiative and outlined what it will take to get there, think about who you will need to support this initiative and how you will share this idea with them. Will it be a written project proposal for your boss? Will it be a presentation for your team? In the bottom left box, define who your audience is, the format you will be presenting it in, and outline any questions you think your audience will ask.

Strategy Statement

Write your strategy statement. Think of your strategy statement as an elevator pitch, an if-then statement that clearly defines what your initiative is and the outcomes you believe it will achieve.

Social Sustainability Planning Tool

Big Idea: What is your desired outcome?

Scope & Logic

What, why, who, when, and where?

Resources

What resources do you have?

What resources do you need?

Goals & Milestones (with a time frame)

What is your main goal?

What milestones will you celebrate?

Key Metrics (measurable outputs)

What will success look like?

Communication Strategy

Who is your audience for your social sustainability story?

What is the format (paper, presentation, talk) you plan to use?

What questions should you be prepared for?

Strategy Statement (If... then...)

What is your elevator pitch?

Note. Adapted from "Sustainability Initiative Canvas" [Class handout], by C. Rider and S. Hart, 2024, Sustainable Leadership in the ESG Era, University of Michigan Ross School of Business. Adapted with permission.



Build Support to Launch Your Initiative

You have developed a plan for a social sustainability initiative. Now it is time to share it with your larger organization. How you go about presenting this idea to your colleagues is just as important as the idea itself. The following activities will help you to further refine your big idea and build buy-in to support your initiative.

1. Know Your Audience
2. Share Your Initiative: The Big Idea
3. Incorporate Feedback
4. Celebrate Progress

Know Your Audience

You have developed a plan for a social sustainability initiative. Now it is time to share it with your larger organization. Before you share your idea, think about your audience and what you will need to address to secure their support.

Tip: Think about how your idea will advance the goals of your audience.

Get Started: Ask yourself the following questions.

Who needs to approve this initiative?

Whose support is critical for this initiative to succeed?

How will you secure their support?

Who else will support your initiative and why?

What shared goal will this initiative address?

Who will challenge your initiative?

What questions will they ask?

What can you do to address these concerns?

Share Your Initiative: The Big Idea

Now that you know your audience, how can you strengthen your pitch?

Tip: Keep it clear and simple.

Here is an example strategy statement to get you started: If we adopt a pay equity policy, then we will increase retention, boost employee morale, reduce hiring costs for training, increase quality of life and well-being, and improve employee engagement, for the overall success of our garden.

Get Started: Write the strategy statement you developed in the Social Sustainability Planning Tool here.

Rework your strategy statement (If . . . then . . .)

Reflection Questions

- What story or stories can you share to support your initiative?
- How will you connect your initiative to existing goals and policies?
- If your garden has a strategic plan, how can you connect your initiative to the strategic plan?
- What research and data support your initiative?

Incorporate Feedback

Now that you have a clear and concise pitch for your idea, share it! Be prepared for disagreement. It is a part of any organizational change, and your initiative is about change. Approach any disagreement you face with curiosity. Remember that questions are not criticism and disagreement can be constructive. If you can better understand concerns, this understanding may help you rethink and strengthen your approach.

Tip: Use the “yes...and” technique to foster creative thinking by asking, “What is 10% of what I proposed that you like and would say ‘yes’ to... and what is one new or different idea you can contribute?”

Get Started: Share your idea with a diverse group of stakeholders. Invite people into the process by asking for feedback and ideas that build on yours. Incorporate feedback to establish a shared sense of ownership. Fill out the questions below to get you started.

What questions will help guide your requests for feedback?

How can you address their concerns?

Who supports your initiative? Why?

Who at your organization is neutral? Why?

Who does not support your initiative? Why?

What feedback will you incorporate into your plan?

Celebrate Progress

Once your initiative is under way, remember to celebrate your successes and milestone moments to maintain forward momentum.

Tip: Remember no success is too small to celebrate!

Get Started: What milestone moments will you celebrate and how will you celebrate them?

Short-term

Medium-term

Long-term



This Is Just the Beginning...

The Fellows hope that this process has empowered your team to develop an initiative you are excited about. Together we will continue to support our communities' well-being and quality of life for present and future generations.

You Have:

- Established Your Starting Point
- Developed Your Initiative: The Big Idea
- Built Support to Launch Your Initiative

This is just the beginning. What are the next steps you will take to continue the process of advancing your big idea?

Short-term

Medium-term

Long-term

About the Fellows Program



The Longwood Fellows Program is a unique leadership development program, preparing high-potential professionals for high-impact public horticulture careers. The 2024–2025 Longwood Fellows are widely accomplished, with diverse areas of expertise and extensive experience in public garden leadership. This project reflects their global perspective and common goal to contribute to public gardens in the field of social sustainability.

The Longwood Fellows Program is a one-of-a-kind leadership development program designed to prepare high-potential professionals for high-impact roles in public horticulture. Continuing Longwood Gardens' mission-driven history of targeted training and education for horticulture professionals, the Fellows Program supports the development of a robust, diverse, and qualified talent pool for the sector at large. Fellows have unique opportunities to refine their leadership skills by heightening self-awareness, interacting with experts and thought leaders, and absorbing customized content on organizational behavior, nonprofit management, strategic planning, and team development. The program grafts theory with practice, offering Fellows the opportunity to conduct case-based discussions, learn from regional and global public horticulture leaders, and engage in pragmatic learning via departmental immersions, a two-month field placement with a partner organization, and a research-based cohort project focused on addressing pressing issues in public horticulture.

More information about the Longwood Fellows Program can be found at longwoodgardens.org/fellows. Applications are accepted each June 1–July 31 for the cohort starting the following summer. Organizations are invited to nominate outstanding staff members to participate in this prestigious leadership development opportunity.

Pictured above from left to right: Clare Shearman, Laurel Dunning, Anastasia Sallen, E. Yvette Weaver, and Vânia Pereira.

2024–2025 Longwood Fellows

Laurel Dunning

Laurel Dunning has led horticulture teams and managed several historic landmark gardens in California. An alumna of Longwood Gardens' esteemed internship program and a Longwood Fellow, Laurel has deepened her expertise in arboriculture, strategic planning, and team leadership. She is passionate about land stewardship and the integration of natural resource conservation within public garden landscapes.

"Social sustainability in public horticulture means cultivating connections and creating inclusive spaces where people can explore, grow, and thrive together. Just as we care for, protect, and advocate for our botanical collections, it is vital that we extend the same level of care and advocacy to the horticulturists who steward them."

Vânia Pereira

Vânia Pereira, originally from Brazil, earned her Ph.D. in Environmental Horticulture from the University of Florida, where she researched and developed a sustainable production protocol for the conservation of a native palm. She is a passionate conservation horticulturist committed to advancing plant conservation and fostering inclusive and educational public garden spaces.

"Public gardens play a key role in connecting people with nature by providing welcoming spaces filled with beauty, opportunities for learning, plant conservation efforts, and places to relax—supporting the well-being of both visitors and staff."

Anastasia Sallen

Anastasia Sallen most recently served as Associate Vice President for Education at Marie Selby Botanical Gardens in Sarasota, Florida. With a background in horticulture and education, she enjoys building dynamic programs that spark curiosity about the environment.

"As places where plants and people come together, public gardens are uniquely situated to support the well-being of staff and their local communities, leading us towards a more sustainable future. Together, our seemingly small actions for social sustainability echo out into larger collective change."

Clare Shearman

Clare Shearman serves as the Plant Collection Team Manager at Wellington Botanic Garden in New Zealand, maintaining the garden's historical significance while adapting to modern times, allowing her to combine her passions for history, garden design, and plant cultivation.

"In today's world, gardens have become increasingly vital, serving as spaces that promote well-being, relaxation, conservation, and education—far more than just aesthetically pleasing open areas."

E. Yvette Weaver

Yvette Weaver's horticultural journey has been defined by her dedication to enriching New York City's public gardens. Most recently she served as Horticulture Supervisor at Friends of The High Line. Her passion for public gardens has grown to include a dedication to the people who work in the field of horticulture, and a desire to create and build opportunities for careers and growth in horticulture.

"Public gardens are essential not only for connecting visitors to vibrant and dynamic green spaces, but also for fostering thriving and dignified work cultures that enhance employee engagement and professional growth."



FEEL THE MAGIC

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longwoodgardens.org/fellows