



## Garden, India to collaborate on new plant species research

ATLANTA (February 27, 2024) – The Atlanta Botanical Garden has entered an unprecedented agreement with the Indian government that will allow the two to collaborate on efforts to document, collect and identify new plant species in vastly underexplored regions of the country.

In exchange, the Garden will share its expertise with colleagues there about India's biodiversity as well as improve horticultural techniques through ongoing training.

"This type of agreement has never before been reached between the Indian government and a nongovernmental organization, such as a private, nonprofit botanical garden," said Mary Pat Matheson, the Garden's President & CEO. "We're proud to say it's the result of the strong personal relationships that our team has developed over the years with colleagues in India along with the Garden's exemplary reputation."

The agreement, or Memorandum of Understanding, marks the second time the Garden has formalized its collaboration with plant explorers and scientists in southeast Asia, which yields the vast majority of plants suitable for growing in the southeastern United States. Since 2018, the Garden has had a similar partnership with colleagues in Vietnam.

The exchanges are the work of the Garden's International Plant Exploration Program, formed in 2016 to collaborate with partners around the world to help preserve and evaluate new plant species for use in southeastern landscapes. The program also reflects the Garden's core mission in connecting people with plants in ongoing efforts to save the planet.



“In the beginning, the focus was on plant collection, evaluation and exchanging knowledge via our visiting scholars program,” said Scott McMahan, the program’s manager. “Over the years – and after nearly 40 trips to southeast Asia – our priorities have shifted somewhat to develop meaningful, collaborative relationships with our colleagues in Asia.”

The Garden’s agreement with the Vietnam Academy of Science and Technology has led to seven successful expeditions, documentation of multiple new plant species and the creation of a staff exchange program. During the program, Vietnamese researchers work with Garden horticulture and conservation staff to learn such things as propagation protocols for cuttings and seed, long-term storage of seed, hand pollination techniques and soil recipes.

Nine years ago, McMahan traveled to India in hopes of forming a similar partnership with the government’s forestry and environmental arm, known as the Botanical Survey of India. But it wasn’t until after multiple trips and years of negotiation that an MOU was recently reached. “It was a red-letter day, for sure,” McMahan said.

“With these sorts of agreements in place, the Garden and its partners in India and Vietnam can continue to explore the remote, mountainous regions of these countries and document the remarkable biodiversity still remaining far away from human interference.”

In India, for example, the Garden plans to work with government research stations in its northeastern states to develop practical techniques for conserving rare plant species. The Garden also will encourage knowledge exchange, targeting plant groups such as Magnolias, Hydrangeas, Gingers and Begonias – the latter of which staff discovered a new species in 2022.

“Long term, collaborations such as these provide opportunities for all participants that just aren’t possible when working alone,” McMahan said. “We’re all pursuing mutual goals.”

The mission of the Atlanta Botanical Garden is to develop and maintain plant collections for display, education, research, conservation, and enjoyment. The Garden is located at 1345 Piedmont Ave. NE and open November through March from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday and from April through October from 9 a.m.-7 p.m. Tuesday through Sunday. Admission is \$21.95 adults, \$15.95 children 3-12, free to children under 3 and Garden members. For more information visit [atlantabg.org](http://atlantabg.org) or phone 404-876-5859.

**Media Contact:**

Danny Flanders

404-591-1550

[dflanders@atlantabotanicalgarden.org](mailto:dflanders@atlantabotanicalgarden.org)