



Gardens partner to expand opportunities for future scientists

Applications now accepted for mentorship program aimed at promoting diverse workforce

ATLANTA (January 8, 2025) – The Atlanta Botanical Garden along with three others – California Botanic Garden, San Diego Botanic Garden and The Morton Arboretum – have joined forces to diversify the next generation of plant scientists through a paid training and mentorship program for individuals with bachelor’s degrees.

Now in its third year, the Rare Plant RaMP (Research and Mentoring for Post-Baccalaureates) Program was developed to elevate the experience and professional skills of the next generation of researchers, first-generation college students, individuals from low-income households, those historically excluded from STEM fields and those who were not able to explore intensive research opportunities during their undergraduate studies. Through this year-long program, participants investigate the unprecedented global decline of plant biodiversity while working alongside science teams at the participating gardens.

“Coming out of college, I was uncertain how to take the next steps toward my ultimate goal of becoming a botanist. I worried about whether I had the experience so many jobs required,” said Noel Bennett, a mentee at San Diego Botanic Garden. “However, the RaMP program has completely shifted my perspective. Through this program, I have gained invaluable knowledge and had the opportunity to refine and develop new skills through my independent research project. It has challenged me in the best ways possible, pushing me to grow and exposing me to a wide range of career paths within the field.”

Funded by the National Science Foundation, the innovative network empowers mentees to perform both independent and collaborative research to advance their careers. Currently, eight total mentees from across the country have been selected to work at the four gardens on hands-on projects focused on plant conservation, botanical surveying, seed banking dynamics, ecology, genetics and more to help safeguard rare and endangered plants against threats including habitat destruction and climate change.

“This experience has shown me the value and importance of global collaboration on rare plant conservation efforts,” said Angie Wang, a mentee at The Morton Arboretum. “I have been able to learn, experience and apply a variety of different technical skills as well as plant knowledge to my research project. This job has shaped my mindset about my career goals and has been such a rewarding experience.”



Examples of mentorship project opportunities at each institution include:

- **Atlanta Botanical Garden:** Assessing hybridization of North American pitcher plants, *Sarracenia*, to inform conservation decisions.
- **California Botanic Garden:** Conducting a population genetic study of Pierson's milkvetch, *Astragalus magdalenae piersonii*, to identify high-priority populations for conservation and to inform seed-banking strategies.
- **San Diego Botanic Garden:** Analyzing rare medicinal plants such as yerba santa, *Eriodictyon*, for treatment of neurodegenerative diseases.
- **The Morton Arboretum:** Evaluating the condition, threat and health of trees and their populations to inform conservation action.

In addition to first-hand research experience, RaMP mentees participate in activities to foster professional development and networking opportunities, including bi-weekly meetings with peers from partnering gardens; exchange visits and workshops at other academic, government or industry labs; and attending the annual Center for Plant Conservation conference to present research alongside their peers. A yearly stipend with benefits, including travel expenses to attend conferences and workshops, is provided.

Applications for the 2025 program are now being accepted through March 14. Eligibility applies to U.S. citizens, U.S. nationals or permanent U.S. residents and those who have completed bachelor's degrees before participating in the program (Individuals must apply before or within four years of graduation, with extensions allowed for family, medical leave or military service). Individuals cannot be currently enrolled or accepted into a graduate program.

About the Partner Institutions

Atlanta Botanical Garden

The mission of the Atlanta Botanical Garden is to develop and maintain plant collections for display, education, research, conservation and enjoyment. Its Southeastern Center for Conservation is a hub for regional partners engaged in collaborative plant conservation research. The Garden is located at 1345 Piedmont Ave. NE, Atlanta, GA 30309. For information, visit atlantabg.org or phone 404-876-5859.

California Botanic Garden

California Botanic Garden is dedicated to California native plants, promoting botany, conservation and horticulture to inspire and educate the public and scientific community about California's native flora. The Garden is a living museum with curated collections of more than 22,000 California native plants, some of which are rare or endangered. Spread across 86 acres in Claremont, CalBG displays about 2000 taxa of California plants and includes those native to the California Floristic Province. Garden staff are also active in research, conservation, and restoration programs across Southern California. More info: calbg.org.

**San Diego Botanic Garden**

Established in 1970, San Diego Botanic Garden (SDBG) is a 37-acre urban oasis located in Encinitas, California, just north of San Diego. The Garden's four miles of trails and 8,000 square foot glass conservatory display more than 5,300 plant species and varieties. A premiere institution for botanical science and conservation, SDBG is actively involved in conservation horticulture, botany, and applied plant sciences to address the biggest local and global challenges, from biodiversity loss to climate change, food insecurity to environmental degradation. SDBG has the largest public bamboo collection in North America; gardens representing different regions and flora of the world; and demonstration gardens showcasing fruits and vegetables, water-smart ornamentals, and native plants. Through an array of educational programming, events and activities for both children and adults, the Garden aims to create, share and apply plant wisdom to the world. Learn more at sdbg.org.

The Morton Arboretum

The Morton Arboretum is an internationally recognized tree-focused botanical garden and research center near Chicago in Lisle, Illinois. Its 1,700 acres include specialty tree and plant collections, 9 miles of roads and 16 miles of hiking trails, a central Grand Garden, Children's Garden, educational programs and a Visitor Center. Additional information about the Arboretum's scientific work and how it contributes to a greener, healthier world for future generations can be found at mortonarb.org.

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Media Contact:

Danny Flanders
404-591-1550
dflanders@atlantabg.org