



Garden Club of America honors Matheson with national award

ATLANTA (January 8, 2026) – The Garden Club of America has awarded its highest national honor to Mary Pat Matheson, the Atlanta Botanical Garden’s Anna and Hays Mershon President & CEO.

Matheson was honored with the prestigious Amy Angell Collier Montague Medal, awarded for outstanding civic achievement and visionary leadership in the field of public garden management. The medal, among up to 10 awarded annually to individuals and organizations, will be presented in April during the Garden Club of America’s 113th annual meeting in New York.



“I am deeply honored to receive this award from the Garden Club of America. The GCA represents excellence in horticulture, conservation and civic leadership, and this recognition is profoundly meaningful to me personally,” said Matheson, who has led the Garden, celebrating its 50th anniversary, for nearly 24 years. “It reflects my own journey as well as the shared work of many dedicated colleagues and partners. I accept it with great gratitude and renewed purpose.”

With a long-standing tradition of celebrating extraordinary efforts to protect and beautify the planet, the Garden Club of America honors those who have made a profound and lasting impact on the issues most valued by the national organization.

“Visionary leadership has been the hallmark of horticulturist Mary Pat Matheson . . . President and CEO of the Atlanta Botanical Garden since 2002. Her initiatives to engage the local community, host innovative cultural programs, highlight conservation and showcase horticultural displays—including North America’s foremost indoor collection of species orchids on permanent display—have elevated the profile of the 30-plus acre garden as a center for scientific research and community outreach, and distinguished her as an outstanding leader in her field,” according to the award nomination by the Peachtree Garden Club, Zone VIII, which in 2022 honored Matheson with its Zone VIII Civic Improvement Commendation.

Matheson has led capital campaigns that have raised well over \$100 million to double the size of the Garden, construct a visitor center and parking facility, renovate the children’s garden and establish the Atlanta Botanical Garden, Gainesville. Currently, the Garden is completing a \$160 million campaign to expand the Midtown attraction by nearly 8 acres, which will connect the Garden to the Atlanta Beltline, a 22-mile multiuse trail looping the city.



Matheson, who led the development of the Garden's Southeastern Center for Conservation, also has had an impact on global public garden management while serving on the Botanic Gardens Conservation International Advisory Council in which she collaborated with garden leaders to examine the role of public gardens in urban greening and biodiversity, practicing and promoting environmental sustainability, and addressing the illegal plant trade.

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Founded in 1913, the GCA is a nonpartisan, issue-oriented advocate for a beautiful, healthy planet. It is a nonprofit national organization recognized for its leadership in horticulture, conservation, creative arts, historic preservation, and environmental protection. Its mission is to bring its 199 member clubs together to cultivate a bond among people, plants, and the environment. The GCA member clubs consist of 18,000 club members who devote energy and expertise to projects in their communities and across the United States.

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, Atlanta, GA 30309. For information, visit atlantabg.org or phone 404-876-5859.

Photo available upon request.

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