GGI-Gardens Newsletter

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News, highlights & opportunities from the botanic garden community

Global Genome Initiative for Gardens is an international partnership dedicated to collecting and preserving genome quality tissues for all species of plants on Earth

GGI-Gardens announces the 2025 GGI-Gardens Partnership Award Program

GGI-Gardens is pleased to announce a fourth year of partnership between the United States Botanic Garden and the Global Genome Initiative for Gardens (GGI-Gardens), administered through BGCI's Global Botanic Garden Fund. Partnerships will provide up to $6,500 in 2025 to support sampling activities from living collections with unique families and genera of vascular plants not yet represented in GGBN biorepositories. The deadline for applications is **November 15, 2024**. For more details visit the call for applications.

Photos of past GGI-Garden Partnerships;
Top left: San Diego Botanic Garden
Top right: Northwestern University
Bottom: Desert Botanical Garden

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This 2023 GGI-Gardens Partnership enabled Botanical Garden of Medellín the collection of 84 genera (**12 new to GGBN**) across 33 plant families.

Macondo tree (*Cavanillesia platanifolia*), form, flowers and fruit. Photo credit: Botanical Garden of Medellín

GGI-Gardens Award Partner Profile

Verónica Bedoya, herbarium assistant in the work of mounting specimens in the JAUM herbarium. Photo credit: Botanical Garden of Medellín

Botanical Garden of Medellín, Columbia

The mission of the Jardín Botánico de Medellín (JBM) is to generate, share, and apply scientific knowledge on Colombia's plant diversity, contributing to conservation, restoration, and sustainable management. JBM strives to encourage ethical use of native flora while enhancing the well-being of Colombians.

The collections at the Jardín Botánico de Medellín include the JAUM Herbarium, housing over 100,000 plant specimens, and the Living Plant Collection, featuring more than 1,400 species that form a flourishing refuge in the heart of Medellín. These resources support scientific research, conservation, education, and public display. Through the 2023 GGI-Gardens Partnership Award, the garden launched its plant tissue collection, gathering material from over 100 species, predominantly Colombian natives. DNA and herbarium voucher specimens were collected from 84 genera (12 newly represented in GGBN) across 33 plant families.

During the project, JBM witnessed the blooming of the Macondo tree (*Cavanillesia platanifolia*) for the first time in 17 years, allowing a sample to be collected and included in the collection. Similar to the Old World baobabs, this species is native to the wet Neotropical biome and can reach heights of up to 50 meters. Its flowers, pollinated by bats at night, produced hundreds of winged fruits up to 18 cm in diameter. Some viable seeds germinated, and seedlings will be added to enrich the Living Plant Collection.

Vicki Funk (right), founder of GGI-Gardens and Morgan Gostel (left), current director of GGI-Gardens (photo credit: Morgan Gostel).

Vicki Funk on a field trip to Madagascar in 2016, standing in Baobab Alley (photo credit: Morgan Gostel).

The Extraordinary Legacy of GGI-Gardens Founder Vicki Funk

A recent issue of the Plant Press, from the Department of Botany at the National Museum of Natural History, highlighted the extraordinary legacy of the late Dr. Vicki Funk in botanic gardens. Vicki Funk left an enduring legacy in plant science through her visionary work connecting herbaria and botanic gardens. Renowned for her contributions to phylogenetic theory, biogeography, and plant systematics, Funk recognized the potential of botanic gardens in advancing research in the genomic era. In 2014, she spearheaded efforts to link living collections in botanic gardens with scientific research, leading to the creation of the Global Genome Initiative for Gardens (GGI-Gardens).

Funk believed that botanic gardens, which house vast and diverse plant collections, were underutilized for research purposes. She saw a unique opportunity to integrate these collections with genomic studies, helping to fill gaps in the global understanding of plant biodiversity. Her leadership led to the establishment of a global network of botanic gardens collecting genome-quality tissue samples, reinvigorating connections between these gardens and herbaria.

Under Funk's guidance, GGI-Gardens expanded into an international collaboration. Her work has helped bridge a critical gap in plant science, ensuring that botanic gardens play a central role in tackling biodiversity challenges. Vicki Funk's impact continues to shape the future of botanical research, cementing her legacy as a transformative figure in the field.

Upcoming Events

GGBN Information Session, Question and Answer
13 November 2024
9-10:30am ET
Click here to register

This event will feature updates on GGBN's recent activities, new partnerships, and upcoming projects. Attendees will have the opportunity to hear from key members of the GGBN team, who will provide insights into the network's strategic direction and achievements over the past year. Following the updates, there will be a dedicated Q&A session, allowing members to engage directly with GGBN leaders, ask questions, and share their thoughts.