

STRATEGIC PLAN 2017-2021

Approved by the Board of Trustees
February 21, 2017

NEW ENGLAND
WILD
FLOWER
SOCIETY



The mission of New England Wild Flower Society is to conserve and promote the region's native plants to ensure healthy, biologically diverse landscapes.

VISION

Through our leadership, New England's native plants will exist in vigorous populations within healthy, evolving ecosystems, and people across the region will actively promote and protect them in the wild and in their gardens.

ROLE

New England Wild Flower Society will lead the region in all aspects of native plant conservation, horticulture, and education. The Society will continue its leadership role in national and international efforts to conserve native plants, with a particular focus on achieving the goals of the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation in the United Nations' Convention on Biological Diversity.

VALUES

Stewardship

Preserving the integrity, resiliency, diversity, and beauty of the natural world

Leadership

Inspiring action through vision, innovation, and expertise

Acumen

Focusing on long-term goals and making decisions based on science, research, best practices, and effectiveness

Integrity

Acting ethically and with transparency

Community

Fostering a sense of shared purpose and place

Collaboration

Amplifying impact through strategic partnerships

INTRODUCTION

Plants are the cornerstones of Earth's ecosystems and the base of the food chain that leads to our own dinner table. Saving all the charismatic animal species that gain headlines, as well as the ones that remain hidden, will be possible only by conserving the plant communities on which they depend.

The Society's "State of New England's Native Plants" report offers a sobering assessment of the region's dominant plant communities, which face a combination of manmade threats severe enough to impair entire ecological systems—even before we factor in the effects of a changing climate. The losses are staggering: from the declining forest cover in all six states to the disappearance of 50 percent of sandplain grasslands and heathlands to the die-back evident in 80 percent of Cape Cod's marshes. On the species level, 22 percent of New England's native plants are rare or deemed historic, 31 percent of the documented plants are not native, and of those 10 percent are invasive and directly threaten native species. Clearly, the combined efforts of nonprofit organizations, government agencies, and the private sector will be needed to reduce, mitigate, or reverse these threats and to preserve the ability of plants and plant communities to adapt to a changing climate.

The Society has the expertise, respect, and partnerships to lead both action and advocacy on behalf of native plants. In this strategic plan, we build on our impressive accomplishments in the last five years and focus our core conservation, horticulture, and public education programs on achieving the four primary recommendations in our "State of the Plants" report: urgently conserve plant diversity; research, document, and understand New England's plant diversity; promote botanical education and awareness of the importance of native plant diversity; and fully fund efforts to conserve plant diversity.

Goal 1

ACHIEVE TANGIBLE OUTCOMES IN THE CONSERVATION AND RECOVERY OF NATIVE PLANTS

Through decades of innovation and leadership, the Society has developed expertise, model programs, and networks that are primed for success in the next phase of regional and national efforts to conserve native plants. In this plan, we articulate the national and international context for our work and specifically aim to achieve for our region the country-wide targets in the Global Strategy for Plant Conservation (GSPC), which is part of the United Nations' Convention on Biological Diversity. The vision of the GSPC is to "halt the continuing loss of plant diversity and to secure a positive, sustainable future where human activities support the diversity of plant life (including the endurance of plant genetic diversity, survival of plant species and communities and their associated habitats and ecological associations), and where in turn the diversity of plants support and improve our livelihoods and well-being."

- *Conserve and restore the region's rare and endangered plant species*
 - By 2020, collect and permanently store seeds of at least 2,000 populations of all the bankable globally and regionally rare plant species (app. 300 of 388 species).
 - Over the five-year period, increase monitoring of rare plant populations to 500 sites per year.
 - Develop the capacity and partnerships to respond to shifts in the viability of targeted populations and to undertake management activities at 100 rare plant sites throughout the region per year.
 - Continue long-term focus on intensive management, augmentation, and restoration of critical populations of a few of the most endangered plant species.

- More effectively track rare species occurrences and our monitoring, seed collection, germination, and management activities by developing a new database that combines spatial and rare plant data with a volunteer management platform.

Primary Outcomes

- At least 75% of the region's threatened species in seed banks or living collections by 2020 (GSPC target 8). New England may be the first region in the country to meet the goal
 - Number of populations of rare and endangered plants stabilized (with threats reduced), augmented, or restored; progress toward at least 75% of known threatened plant species conserved in situ (GSPC target 7)
 - Increased understanding of the metrics for pulling back from managing a population
 - Increased knowledge about the dynamics/trends in rare plant populations
 - Increased expertise in techniques for in situ conservation of rare plant species
 - Expanded and more effective partnerships and volunteer network for plant conservation
- *Conserve regional plant diversity through coordinated initiatives at the plant community/habitat and landscape scales*
- Identify key areas for plant diversity in each ecological region of New England (see also Goal 2 for additional research and publication of analysis).
 - In collaboration with our NEPCoP partners and others, target key habitats/vegetation types to stabilize, manage, or restore in order to preserve plant and genetic diversity, ensure resiliency in the face of climate change, and meet management targets in the GSPC.
 - Expand the collection and banking of seeds of common species as well as entire plant communities to ensure the preservation of genetic diversity and to generate a reliable source of plant material for restoration projects. Coordinate activities as part of our leading roles in the National Seed Strategy for Rehabilitation and Restoration and the federal Seeds of Success program.
 - Evaluate the feasibility of a region-wide early detection system for invasive plant species.
 - Spearhead coordinated initiatives throughout New England to control invasive species and preserve key areas for plant diversity (GSPC target 10).
 - Provide leadership in national and international efforts to conserve native plants, especially through our partnerships with the federal Plant Conservation Alliance and Seeds of Success program; the Center for Plant Conservation; the Smithsonian's North American Orchid Conservation Center; and the Millennium Seed Bank at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew.

Primary Outcomes

- Key areas for plant diversity in each ecological region of New England identified and plan for targeting them for protection, management, or restoration developed
- Amount of habitats/vegetation types in each ecoregion of New England effectively managed or restored; progress toward goal of 15% of each ecoregion or vegetation type (GSPC target 4)
- Number of most important areas for plant diversity in each ecoregion of New England protected, effectively managed, or restored; progress toward 75% goal (GSPC target 5)
- New biological invasions prevented or managed effectively, especially in areas most important for plant diversity (GSPC target 10)
- Expanded and more effective partnerships and volunteer network for plant conservation

- *To achieve conservation goals, evaluate and develop a renewed strategy for the NEPCoP and PCV programs*
 - Take advantage of the opportunity provided by the Hurricane Sandy project to create a parallel network that harnesses the expertise of local government agencies, land trusts, and private landowners.
 - Consider establishing tiers and training for PCVs based on the botanical knowledge and experience of the volunteers, and expand model to include working with local volunteers for specific projects.
 - Evaluate potential for separate divisions within the professional and volunteer programs, such as rare plant monitoring, seed collecting, management, invasive species control, and general botanical surveys.
 - Replace the volunteer management platform (as above).

Primary Outcomes

- Expanded and more effective partnerships and volunteer network for plant conservation
 - Increased number of both long-term and project-based volunteers
 - Greater ability to undertake conservation and management projects throughout the region
 - Increased capacity and efficiency in volunteer management
- *Advocate effectively and visibly for the conservation of native plants and plant communities*
 - With our colleagues, advocate on the state and national levels for plants to receive legal protection equal to that granted animals.
 - Advocate for listing New England plants, where appropriate, under the federal Endangered Species Act and the IUCN Red List.
 - With our colleagues, advocate for state and federal funding for plant conservation.
 - Continue our advocacy for plant conservation as part of the leadership of the federal North Atlantic Landscape Conservation Cooperative, which is a partnership of federal agencies, tribes, universities, and non-profit organizations focused on conservation science and projects to sustain natural resources, including fish and wildlife populations.
 - Through lectures, articles, editorials, and other means—on our own or in partnership with national organizations or initiatives—consistently position the Society as a visible advocate for native plants and inspire people to join us in the effort.

Primary Outcomes

- Increased awareness among state and federal officials of the importance and value of plant conservation (GSPC target 14)
- Increased legal protection for plants at the state and national levels
- Greater attention to plant conservation in natural resource, wildlife management, and climate change plans developed by state and federal agencies
- More active role in national advocacy and policy discussions
- Enhanced public presence, in part measured by increased requests for our participation, expert advice, interviews, or presentations

Goal 2

DEVELOP, DEMONSTRATE, AND ADVANCE SCIENTIFIC AND PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE REGION'S NATIVE PLANTS

The Society has a long-standing commitment to botanical and horticultural research, and in recent years published works that were the culmination of decades of taxonomic research and field studies. For this plan, we have identified specific research projects—often involving collaboration with colleagues or universities—that will move our own work forward and provide new knowledge about New England's native plants.

- ***Conduct and publish innovative research on rare plant conservation and the flora of New England***
 - Conduct and/or collaborate on research into methods and techniques for ex situ conservation (tissue culture, propagation, etc.) of rare and endangered plant species that cannot be seed banked (app. 80 taxa).
 - Research the potential for assisted migration (relocation) of endemic or near-endemic New England species whose habitats are threatened by the effects of climate change.
 - Undertake and publish an analysis of the region's plant diversity that examines, among other aspects, what percentage 1) of each ecological region or vegetation type and 2) of the most important areas for plant diversity in each ecological region is protected and/or managed effectively (ties to GSPC target 4)
 - Monitor, record, and map changes in the flora of New England to identify trends, such as range shifts and changes in community composition, that are related to climate change.
 - Document and publish on our website a complete record of updates to *Flora Novae Angliae*, which will also serve as a record of changes to Go Botany (GSPC target 1).
 - Continue to research species with undetermined status, unnamed species, and species needing taxonomic clarification.
 - Explore in depth the data the Society has already collected on rare plants and analyze for conservation actions and additional research questions.
 - Publish the results, techniques, and lessons learned from in situ and ex situ projects in both professional and general media (journals, blogs, etc.).

Primary Outcomes

- Increased institutional knowledge about effective conservation strategies for both rare and common plants
 - New knowledge and/or tools beneficial to the plant conservation field
 - Enhanced attention to plants and plant diversity in regional conservation and land protection discussions and plans
 - Enhanced professional reputation and leadership role at the regional and national levels, in part measured by increased requests for our participation, expert advice, interviews, or presentations
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- ***Conduct and publish innovative research in native plant propagation and sustainable horticulture***
 - Shift the nursery's focus away from retail production to research on propagation of native plant species that are difficult to grow and/or hard to find in the nursery trade.
 - With partners, implement a robust research program focusing on two key areas: the ecological value of native species and selected cultivars, and the economic and environmental impacts of turfgrass vs. turfgrass alternatives.
 - Encourage partnerships with academic institutions for student theses or research projects that could be facilitated by staff.

- Integrate analysis of ecological and other performance factors into the buildout of the Garden master plan to document scientific impacts of sustainable landscape design.
- Publish the results, techniques, and lessons in both professional and general media (journals, blogs, etc.).

Primary Outcomes

- Increased institutional knowledge about native plant propagation
- New knowledge and/or tools beneficial to the nursery industry, land managers, ecological restoration project managers, horticulture staff at botanic gardens, and others
- Increased availability of both hard-to-grow native plants and native seed, contributing to our reputation as the best source for native plants
- Expanded and more effective partnerships in native plant horticulture
- Increased attention to native plants and plant diversity in the botanic garden profession
- Enhanced professional reputation and leadership role at the regional and national levels, in part measured by increased requests for our participation, expert advice, interviews, or presentations

Goal 3

INSPIRE AND EDUCATE PEOPLE AND DEVELOP RESOURCES TO HELP THEM CONSERVE, GROW, AND PROMOTE NATIVE PLANTS

The steep decline in botanical education at the university level over the last twenty years makes our commitment to first-rate programs—in the classroom, outdoors, and online—even more important. In the lead up to this plan, we have evaluated and revamped programs, launched online courses, and experimented with public engagement programs at Garden in the Woods. Now we aim to strengthen our offerings, expand our reach, and better serve core audiences.

We envision a robust mix of informal and outreach programs to engage a wide audience, plus formal offerings for conservation, horticulture, and design professionals as well as amateur botanists, gardeners, land owners and managers. We also aim to provide more resources—from inventories of our sanctuaries to a horticultural database to more plant material—that will enable people to conserve, grow, and enjoy our region’s native plants.

- *Inspire and educate people across the region through exceptional formal and informal programs*
 - Evaluate and overhaul the formal education programs, including the certificate programs, to ensure they serve core audiences and the mission; attract new audiences; increase enrollment and graduation rates; and improve learning outcomes.
 - Develop robust online resources--such as courses, webinars, and other multimedia content for the web--that expand our public presence and engage people throughout New England.
 - Build and sustain audiences for field-based programs in each New England state focused on native plants in their natural habitats or showcasing sustainable built landscapes.
 - Build public awareness and engage new audiences by conducting robust, multi-faceted outreach programs (such as the “Pollinate New England” program) in communities across New England.
 - Evaluate how we can best serve professional audiences and develop strategy, format, and partnerships (such as ELA, MACC) for a coherent set of programs.
 - Evaluate market potential for course offerings at Nasami Farm or with partners in the vicinity, and develop appropriate plan.

- Develop a new “speakers’ bureau” model, possibly by working with current program instructors, to help us to meet the demand for off-site speaking engagements from garden clubs, towns, and other nonprofits.

Primary Outcomes

- Comprehensive framework for educational programs, with clear rationale and targets
 - Number of online resources developed, and level of enrollment or use
 - Increased course enrollment and increased certificate program enrollment and graduation rates; including increased number of both first-time and repeat registrants each year
 - Increased level of knowledge or practical skill in program participants, as measured by self-assessments and other tools
 - Expanded regional presence and engagement, as measured by number and geographical distribution of program participants, requests for presentations, local media attention for programs, etc.
 - Increased number or traceable pattern of new members or volunteers resulting from program participation
 - Strengthened partnerships for delivering public programs, improving and assessing learning outcomes, and multiplying the mission impact
- ***Provide people with interesting, useful, and readily accessible information to help them identify, conserve, and grow native plants***
 - Invest in Go Botany to ensure it remains current in both content and technology.
 - Develop a horticultural native plants database for the ecoregions of New England that contains the information needed to grow the plants in designed landscapes.
 - Make information about the plant collection at Garden in the Woods accessible to the public on our website and in the Garden, which requires strengthening the plant records database.
 - Make plant inventories of our sanctuaries available on our website.
 - Make our digital image library available to the public; add images of seeds to the collection.
 - Write and publish (in print, on the web) materials for several audiences, such as magazine articles; books; region-wide guide to invasive plants, including information about when and how to control them; and tips sheets for retail customers to help them pick the right plant for their gardens.
 - In general, improve resources for native plant professionals and enthusiasts on our website.

Primary Outcomes

- Recognition as the preferred source for cultural information about New England’s native plants
 - Enhanced professional reputation and leadership role at the regional and national levels, in part measured by increased requests for our participation, expert advice, interviews, or presentations
- ***Increase the amount of genetically appropriate plant material available for people to use in their gardens, for landscaping, and in restoration projects***
 - Explore models and potential partnerships for large-scale production of native seed for restoration and design projects, to fill an increasing demand by nurseries and restoration projects for both quantity and range of species (National Seed Strategy Goals 1 &3).
 - Engage and educate the nursery trade, our customers, and those responsible for restoration projects about the importance of seed-grown, local provenance native plants grown without systemic pesticides.
 - Build market demand for seed-grown, local provenance native plants grown without systemic pesticides through such initiatives as a “green medal” branding program.

- Build awareness that 100 percent of plants sold in our retail shops are already grown without systemic pesticides.
- Build market interest in the hard-to-grow, hard-to-find plants coming from the nursery research program.
- Develop transition and outreach/nursery partner plan to ensure adequate supply of locally adapted plants for our own retail needs as the Nasami nursery focuses more on seed collection and R&D and less on production.
- Continue converting our own retail plants to known provenance from the ecoregions of New England, with a goal of achieving 75 percent conversion by the end of the five-year period.
- Explore the feasibility of adding seeds to the retail sales mix.

Primary Outcomes

- Increase in number of nurseries that use native seed to grow plants for sale to the trade and to retail outlets, as measured by requests, contracts, etc. through Nasami and our seed-generating partners (see R&D in Goal 2)
 - Percent increase in species of known provenance, seed-grown plants from the ecoregions of New England sold at our retail shops
 - Expansion in our shops' customer base and in sales of known-provenance, seed-grown native plants, with feedback that we are the preferred source for plants
- ***Inspire and educate visitors to Garden in the Woods through first-rate public programs, interpretation, and services***
 - Serve visitors and draw new audiences to Garden in the Woods with informal adult education opportunities, family and children's programming, and mission-related signature events like Arbor Day and Trillium Week.
 - More effectively serve school groups by revising the children's tour program to meet curriculum standards, improve learning outcomes, and better meet the needs of teachers and students.
 - Develop both an interim and a long-term interpretive plan for Garden in the Woods to more effectively deliver our message now and throughout the implementation of the master plan.
 - Develop and begin implementing a long-term plan for a visitor services department that incorporates on-site programming, point-of-entry admission and membership sales, café and shop management, rentals, facilities management, custodial services, and security.
 - Explore options, such as a cultural loop in the regional bus service or special arrangements with Uber or Lyft, for getting to the Garden without a car to both relieve parking issues and provide access for urban audiences
 - Overhaul the Garden rental program so that it functions as a vehicle for building professional and community relationships rather than as an income generator. Offer free or cost-only (cleaning, paid host, etc.) space to garden clubs, environmental organizations, state and local agencies, and local civic groups.

Primary Outcomes

- Coupled with master plan changes, enhanced Garden visibility and reputation, as measured by increased attendance, press coverage, visitor surveys, etc.
- Growth in year-over-year Garden attendance attributable to informal programs and special events (under comparable weather conditions)
- Increased Garden and shop revenue, especially in months other than May, and a move away from dependence on opening weeks and Mother's Day as make-or-break financially
- Growth in membership from within a 25-mile radius of the Garden, resulting from programming, master plan improvements, and membership-building activities

- Closer partnerships with area schools, and improvement in learning outcomes and general experience, as reported in post-visit evaluations
- Improved “gateways” for visitors (online, on site) and more seamless customer service experience across now separate departments

Goal 4

ENSURE OUR PROPERTIES ARE MODELS OF STEWARDSHIP

In developing the first master plan for Garden in the Woods, the Society created a framework not only for site improvements, but also for thoughtful, robust ecological horticulture that can demonstrate approaches to restoring and caring for the New England landscape. The science and stewardship that inform the master plan, combined with our hands-on experience in both the Garden and the wild, led us to review and commit to improved management of Nasami Farm and our sanctuaries in Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont.

Since the early 1960s, the Society has acquired a portfolio of undeveloped lands, primarily through bequests and donations. Many of the properties protect important botanical features and populations of rare plants. While the Society has often wanted to focus on the sanctuaries as places that attract people, few are located where it is realistic to invest in engagement. This plan emphasizes that the primary focus must be more effective management of the sanctuaries and assessment of the strategic role of each property in the Society.

- *Invest in Garden in the Woods to renew its role as a model for the use of native plants in built landscapes and ecological horticulture*
 - Address critical infrastructure needs at Garden in the Woods.
 - Complete a site utilities plan for existing service and proposed utility needs for buildout of the master plan, including electrical, communications, potable water, stormwater, sewer, and onsite fuel storage.
 - Repair and/or replace aging water system infrastructure to ensure adequate water supply and improved potable water quality.
 - Design and install an irrigation system for both the retail sales area and the retail side-yard to ensure that plant sales staff can both meet the needs of plant inventory and provide good customer service.
 - Prepare the Garden for implementation of Phase 1 of the master plan.
 - Relocate the Society’s headquarters, including administration, philanthropy, conservation, and possibly public programs; demolish administration building.
 - Build a small extension to the visitor center to ensure it can function, and more effectively serve visitors and members, until the new center is constructed.
 - Complete comprehensive site survey of the property, including mapping of all regulatory areas, buffer zones, and rare species habitat and potential habitat.
 - Complete design and permitting of the irrigation system, and begin building the new system in conjunction with garden projects.
 - Complete design and permitting of the storm water management system.
 - Develop aesthetic guidelines to aid design decisions and maintain consistency in the gardens, buildings, and amenities.
 - Remove obsolete structures, such as the solar greenhouse, cottage, barn, and visitor center.
 - Construct greenhouse at horticulture building.
 - Reconfigure parking lot and construct bus/unloading area on Hemenway Road.
 - Make substantial progress toward completion of Phase 1 of the master plan.
 - Develop a plant production/procurement schedule for Phase 1.

- Construct the storm water infrastructure (successional swamp, Lily Pond/Atlantic white cedar swamp).
 - Design and build the trial garden, which will clear the existing stock bed area for construction of the transitional slopes and terraces.
 - Design and build the transitional slopes and terraces, including the accessible switchback trail from the plateau to the existing coastal sand plain.
 - Design and build the accessible trail from the existing stock bed area to the cottage/conservation laboratory area of the Curtis Woodland Garden.
 - Make substantial progress on the design of hemlock cove.
- By 2021, be financially and physically prepared to break ground on the new visitor center and conservation laboratory, which entails completing the fundraising, design, and permitting.

Primary Outcomes

- Clear vision of the phasing for master plan implementation and its logistical challenges
 - Major transitions accomplished with minimal disruption to operations and the visitor experience
 - Enhanced Garden visibility and public reputation, as measured by increased attendance, press coverage, visitor surveys, etc.
 - Enhanced professional reputation, through publication of case studies and achievements in the process
 - Momentum in the fundraising for later phases
- ***Determine the best and most productive use for Nasami Farm and implement better stewardship practices in both the agrarian and sanctuary sections of the property***
 - Repair, replace, and build new infrastructure to meet current needs of the nursery and retail plant sales.
 - Repair/replace and/or construct new plant propagation infrastructure. Rebuild existing greenhouse end walls, replace aging greenhouse heaters, improve insulation, and improve drainage by installing level floors.
 - Within the Native Plant Center, build sterile infrastructure, heated space for producing ferns from spore, and a tissue culture lab for propagation research.
 - Develop an irrigation plan and system to ensure adequate year-round water supply for both retail and nursery demands.
 - Design and install shade and wind protection for retail area to reduce plant losses and demand for watering.
 - Replace the pump house that provides irrigation water to the nursery.
 - Finish the interior of the Native Plant Center.
 - Ensure the nursery operation serves as a model of sustainability and meets the guidelines for sustainable plant production set forth in the Sustainable Sites Initiative (SITES).
 - Develop and publish a sustainability statement for the nursery operation as outlined in SITES.
 - Reduce the use of potable water in plant production and capture and re-use irrigation runoff water.
 - Make substantial progress toward onsite energy production and reduce overall energy usage.
 - Recycle greenhouse plastics and other waste streams; improve onsite composting procedures, and determine the best and most productive use for finished compost.
 - Make substantial progress toward the elimination of peat moss and other non-sustainable soilless media components.
 - Develop a management plan for the Nasami Farm property that:

- Resolves the existing conflict between the requirements of the Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) and the presence of rare species.
- Establishes a long-term solution for meeting the requirements of the APR.
- Eradicates invasive plant species and restores native plant species when and where appropriate.
- Establishes ecological design elements to encourage beneficial insects for pest management and increased pollinator/insect diversity.
- Provides adequate staffing and resource levels for effective stewardship of the property.

Primary Outcomes

- Clearly articulated vision for Nasami Farm so that both the nursery and the property support the Society’s mission and its strategic direction
 - Improved infrastructure that fully supports the nursery and retail operations
 - Nasami Farm regarded as a model that the nursery industry regularly consults about native plant propagation and sustainable nursery operations
 - Nasami Farm established as a model of stewardship that bridges agriculture and conservation
- *Invest in our sanctuaries to ensure they are preserving the targeted plant populations and communities and are managed to professional standards*
 - Update long-term management plans for all sanctuaries and use them to set goals and priorities for investment. Management might require botanical inventories, rare plant monitoring and protection, canopy management, invasive species control, infrastructure (trails, bridges, boardwalks), and signage.
 - Update 2014 maps of the properties and integrate with the spatial data about the plants.
 - Describe the annual maintenance needs of each property, such as removing invasives, repairing and marking trails, marking property boundaries, monitoring for unauthorized use, maintaining the signage, picking up trash; and determine who (Sanctuary Committee, stewards, staff) will accomplish the work.
 - Evaluate the need to replace the bridges at Sturgis and determine permitting requirements and costs.
 - Decide the future of the house and barn on the Hobbs sanctuary, determine costs, and implement strategy.

Primary Outcomes

- Better understanding of the strategic importance of the sanctuaries collectively and as individual properties
- Consensus on which properties could appropriately be transferred to other organizations
- Clear strategy for managing the sanctuaries, with priorities set both among and within the properties

Goal 5

BUILD AN EXEMPLARY ORGANIZATION

Reaching the goals in this strategic plan will require investment and growth. We need to fund strategic initiatives—banking the seeds of rare plants, conducting research, expanding educational programs and resources, completing the first phase of the master plan for Garden in the Woods—as well as to strengthen the core of the organization. To date we have accomplished far more than our staffing would suggest is possible, and the level of effort is not sustainable without additional staff in both programs and operations.

To achieve our goals, we also need to invest in branding and communications, which will help us build a wider constituency for native plants and a broader base of philanthropic support.

- ***Invest in the people who make the organization great***
 - Invest in our staff, so that we attract and retain top-notch people.
 - Ensure that staffing levels support core operational functions (such as accounting, human resources, facilities, communications) and match the Society’s strategic agenda
 - Ensure that salaries and benefits are competitive.
 - Provide opportunities for participation in professional meetings and conferences and for training, especially in the skills necessary for the success of this plan.
 - Develop “growth tracks” so that staff members have opportunities to advance within the organization.
 - Establish a “creativity fund,” an internal grant program to fund staff ideas and experiments.
 - Invest in our dedicated volunteers, to show our appreciation, to strengthen the partnership, and to expand our outreach.
 - Ensure that all volunteers receive a full orientation to the Society as well as to the specific program for which they are volunteering; develop a manual for volunteers that includes background information about the Society plus pertinent safety, confidentiality, and legal documents.
 - To ensure a seamless experience for volunteers across departments and to keep accurate records, train staff on volunteer management guidelines and software.
 - Provide opportunities for ongoing learning or training for volunteers, from board members to field-based volunteers.
 - Continue our volunteer-appreciation activities, and develop opportunities for increasing a sense of community among volunteers.
 - Invest in our instructors to strengthen the formal education program and foster communication; includes developing a manual and holding appreciation gatherings.
 - Ensure effective governance by recruiting talented board members with varied perspectives and areas of expertise and by systematically evaluating and strengthening the governance structure and procedures.

Primary Outcomes

- Enhanced reputation as a great place to work and volunteer
 - Increased ability to attract and retain staff, volunteers, and instructors, resulting in growing organizational capacity to execute the mission
 - Increased ability to attract high-level expertise to the organization
 - Increased ability to monitor and respond to changes in workplace and labor regulations
- ***Ensure key policies achieve professional standards in our field(s), meet regulatory requirements, and provide a framework for critical operations***
 - Develop a comprehensive safety manual, covering workplace and visitor safety, plus safety of staff and volunteers in the field; establish interdepartmental safety committee.
 - Develop a disaster preparedness and emergency response plan, encompassing both Garden in the Woods and Nasami Farm.
 - Build on and implement the sustainability plan drafted for the Society by a Harvard graduate student; establish an internal “green team” to oversee implementation.
 - Develop a new personnel manual, and develop a guidelines document for managers covering aspects of state and federal law specific to those in hiring and supervisory roles.

- Revise the accounting policies and procedures manual, Written Information Security Plan, and the gift acceptance policy to formally incorporate changes in best practices and government regulations.

Primary Outcomes

- Enhanced, integrated framework for core operations that addresses gaps in current policies
 - Clear commitment to organization-wide, collaborative approach to safety and sustainability
 - Documented guidelines to ensure continuity in critical aspects of operations regardless of changes in staff or management of the organization
- ***Invest in comprehensive branding, marketing, public relations, and communications strategies to raise the profile of the Society and support membership, fundraising, and program goals***
 - Develop a new branding program that includes a full assessment of an organizational name change.
 - Develop a comprehensive marketing and advertising strategy, to build name recognition, support the membership and fundraising efforts, and attract people to programs, the Garden, and the shops.
 - Develop a unified strategy for “routine” communications, including print publications, electronic communications with members, and the website.
 - Invest in public relations to expand media /press coverage and to position staff as experts to be interviewed about key issues.
 - Actively pursue opportunities for staff to present at regional, national, and even international conferences to share our work and strengthen our reputation with peers and peer institutions.
 - Undertake a comprehensive awareness and recruitment analysis to develop a regionally focused acquisition program to increase membership in all six states.

Primary Outcomes

- Enhanced public presence and professional reputation, in part measured by increased visitation, program participation throughout the region, media coverage and requests for interviews, and requests for staff participation and/or expert advice
 - Effective, integrated messaging about native plant conservation and horticulture that raises awareness about core issues and encourages citizen and government action
 - Modernization of the Society’s image and strengthened positioning within the public’s awareness of conservation and horticultural organizations
 - Expanded membership and donor base, including expansion beyond the current geographic limits
- ***Ensure the Society has the technology infrastructure to support core programs and operations***
 - Invest in continuous updates and improvements to the Society website launching in early 2017, and plan for development of new website for launch no later than 2021.
 - Undertake an evaluation of the performance of Altru, our enterprise software, plus a Society-wide analysis of work flow, data needs, and customer service needs to determine if Altru or another system is the appropriate platform for Society operations.
 - In the short term, given Blackbaud’s decision not to invest in the merchandising part of Altru, migrate to new inventory, online sales, and point-of-sale system for the shops that integrates with Altru.
 - Determine if the functions of the current Conservation Department website for managing volunteer assignments can be accommodated by an enterprise or volunteer management platform used Society-wide, by software used by other institutions for similar programs, or if a new, dedicated website needs to be constructed.
 - Investigate alternatives to BGBase for plant and seed bank records, and undertake conversion.

- Investigate database options for nursery seed collection and plant production, and implement new system.
- Purchase and install audiovisual system in the Education building.
- Research and implement RFID technology to automate and improve member admission, transactions, and data tracking.
- Revise current member and donor communication technology platforms and utilize new e-media products to improve efficiency, enhance data collection and tracking, and maximize opportunities for engagement.

Primary Outcomes

- Enhanced ability to efficiently serve and interact with members, donors, visitors, customers, and volunteers
 - Improved internal operational efficiency
 - Improved ability to use and analyze conservation and horticulture data, for staff action as well as for sharing with professional colleagues
- ***Ensure the Society has the resources needed to support current operations, projected program and staff growth, major initiatives, and capital investments***
 - Through comprehensive planning, strengthen annual income streams and develop new sources of support for operations.
 - **Earned revenue:** As master plan improvements, programs, and marketing draw new visitors, increase Garden admission sales by 50 percent and shop sales by 75 percent over the five-year period. Expanded course offerings break even on program costs.
 - **Membership:** Increase revenue from membership by 30 percent over five-year period. Revise pricing to ensure a continued value proposition that maximizes impact from increased public program registration, shop sales, and Garden admission.
 - **Contributions and Grants:** Complete funding for the annual implementation of the Seed Ark program, secure funding for other key program initiatives, and focus on tripling the Conservation Circle and enlarging the pool of major donors.
 - **Endowment:** Improve long-term financial stability by increasing the endowment; focus on three key areas: endow at least one department head position (\$3 million), endow the Seed Ark (\$1 million); endow or complete funding for conservation and horticulture internships (\$350,000 each).
 - Develop a reserve fund to support ongoing capital repairs and equipment purchases.
 - Develop and begin a comprehensive campaign for the first and second phases of the Garden master plan, major program initiatives, and the endowment needed to support them.
 - Create the campaign structure, goals, and preliminary case statement.
 - Undertake a campaign feasibility study.
 - Develop the campaign plan.
 - Hire the campaign fundraising staff.

Primary Outcomes

- Revenue targets for staffing and programs in five-year strategic plan achieved
- Expanded funding base that ensures long-term financial stability
- Increased confidence in ability to fund the next ambitious phase of both core programs and the Garden master plan