

Native Plant Trust

Conserving and promoting
New England's native plants

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Native Plant Trust Appoints Tim Johnson as CEO



Tim Johnson © Sam Masinter

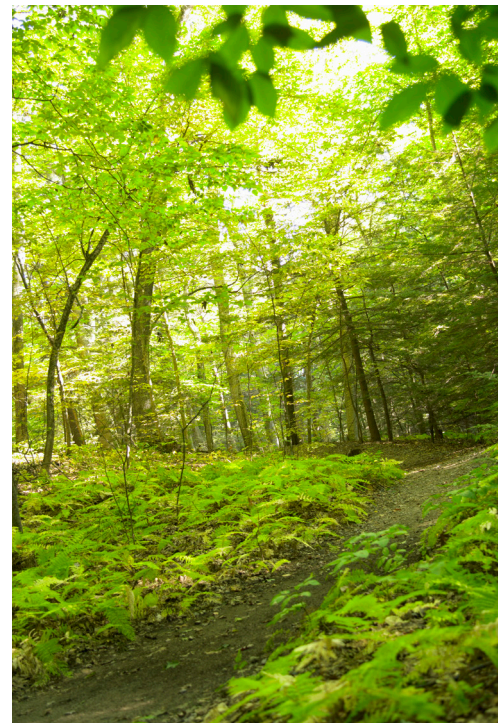
(December 13, 2023 – Framingham, Massachusetts)

— The Board of Trustees of Native Plant Trust today announced the appointment of Tim Johnson as its new Chief Executive Officer. Native Plant Trust is the nation's first plant conservation organization and the only one solely focused on New England's native plants. Johnson joins Native Plant Trust from Smith College, where he was Director of the Botanic Garden and Professor of Practice.

Johnson will lead the conservation and horticulture organization, including 45-acre Garden in the Woods in Framingham, MA; Nasami Farm, a native plant nursery in Whately, MA; and expanded seed-processing and storage facilities to support the new Northeast Seed Network, a regional initiative led by Native Plant Trust to create a sustainable source of seed to meet the increased demand for native plants. Johnson brings a background in environmental horticulture and biological science to a long-standing career in conservation and botanic garden administration and leadership, pillars of Native Plant Trust's mission and organization.

“I am excited to join Native Plant Trust at this important moment, and for the opportunity to meld my experience as a plant conservation researcher and a botanic garden leader in this new role,” said Johnson. “My affection for native plants is born from a childhood spent exploring the great outdoors of Wisconsin, and my appreciation for the importance of protecting the rarest of the rare comes from my graduate studies working with threatened orchids on the Florida Panther National Wildlife Refuge. I know the importance and relevance of Native Plant Trust because it is an organization that has inspired me professionally and personally for twenty years. I have always been attracted to the organization’s scientifically sound approach to plant conservation and citizen science, desire to push the envelope on environmentally friendly native plant garden design, and ability to meet the learning needs of a diverse range of plant lovers.”

“We are thrilled to welcome Tim as our CEO,” said Bill Huyett, Chair of Board of Trustees at Native Plant Trust. “Tim’s academic background and leadership experience in conservation, horticulture and education are an exemplary fit with our organization and our plans for growth. Native Plant Trust has an ambitious vision to expand our impact in the areas of ecological horticulture, native plant conservation, biodiversity and climate change. Our board looks forward to working with Tim to harness Native Plant Trust’s strong foundation and reputation to expand and deliver on that vision with the highest sense of urgency. I am truly excited by the opportunity to work with Tim in translating his track record of impact and innovation in relating science to diverse audiences to our work in the Northeast and beyond. This is an important moment for expansion and innovation in our organization as we approach our 125th anniversary in 2025.”



Native plant garden at Nasami Farm © Liza Green; Spring at Garden in the Woods © Gary Sloan.

At Smith College, Johnson expanded the impact of scientific programming and conservation science research, mentorship and education. He oversaw the financial management of the renowned botanic garden, and guided the development of organizational vision in alignment with mission. He grew the botanic garden's fundraising capacity, led strategic planning including the first comprehensive plan in its 128-year history, and restructured and strengthened internal and external communications. He modernized links to the college curriculum, oversaw membership growth, audience diversification and founded the garden's germplasm conservation collections by partnering with Botanic Gardens Conservation International. Prior to his role at Smith, Johnson was Head of Preservation and Seed Bank Manager at Seed Savers Exchange, an international non-profit that stewards America's culturally diverse and endangered garden and food crop legacy through the preservation and collection of 27,000 heirloom seed varieties.

A native of Wisconsin, Johnson focused his studies on biology and environmental horticulture, earning a Bachelor of Science in biological sciences at the University of Wisconsin- Eau Claire and a PhD in environmental horticulture from the University of Florida. The appointment is the culmination of a national search, and follows the retirement of Executive Director Debbi Edelstein in January 2024 after fifteen years of distinguished service to the organization. Johnson will begin his role as CEO at Native Plant Trust on January 29, 2024.

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ABOUT NATIVE PLANT TRUST

Native Plant Trust is the nation's first plant conservation organization and the only one solely focused on New England's native plants. We save native plants in the wild, grow them for gardens and restorations, and educate others on their value and use. From our base in Massachusetts, staff and trained volunteers work throughout New England each year to monitor and protect rare and endangered plants, collect and preserve seeds to ensure biological diversity, detect and control invasive species, conduct research, and offer a range of educational programs. We welcome visitors from all over the world to Garden in the Woods, our renowned native plant botanic garden in Framingham. We also operate a nursery at Nasami Farm in western Massachusetts and manage six sanctuaries in Maine, New Hampshire, and Vermont that are open to the public. Native Plant Trust is among the first organizations worldwide to receive Advanced Conservation Practitioner accreditation by London-based Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI), which included an endorsement by an International Advisory Council representing six continents. Please visit www.NativePlantTrust.org.