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Contact: Eva Malecki
(202) 228-1793

U.S. Botanic Garden Receives Highest National Recognition Awarded Accreditation from the American Association of Museums

WASHINGTON – The United States Botanic Garden (USBG) has achieved accreditation from the American Association of Museums (AAM), the highest national recognition for a museum.

Of the nation's nearly 17,500 museums about 775 are currently accredited. Notably, of several hundred public gardens in North America, the U.S. Botanic Garden is one of only 19 that have been awarded accreditation.

AAM accreditation brings national recognition to a museum for its commitment to excellence, accountability, high professional standards, and continued institutional improvement. Developed and sustained by museum professionals for 35 years, AAM's museum accreditation program is the field's primary vehicle for quality assurance, self-regulation, and public accountability. It strengthens the museum profession by promoting practices that enable leaders to make informed decisions, allocate resources wisely, and remain financially and ethically accountable in order to provide the best possible service to the public.

Accreditation is a very rigorous process that examines all aspects of a museum's operations. To earn accreditation a museum first must conduct a year of self-study, and then undergo a site visit by a team of peer reviewers. AAM's Accreditation Commission, an independent and autonomous body of museum professionals, consider the self-study and visiting committee report to determine whether a museum should receive accreditation. While the time to complete the process varies by museum, it generally takes as much as three years. The United States Botanic Garden began the process in 2006.

"It is an honor to have the Botanic Garden receive this distinction – one of only 19 public gardens in the entire country to be recognized with accreditation. I'm very proud of our USBG staff for their commitment to achieving this goal, and to providing the visiting public with a wonderful, educational experience each time they visit the Botanic Garden," said Stephen T. Ayers, AIA, Acting Architect of the Capitol.

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“Our staff is passionate about the importance of plants. We have worked hard to promote appreciation for the beauty and diversity of plants, as well as the importance of plant conservation and preservation of the environment. We view our role as advocating for plants. Being recognized as a ‘museum for plants’ is a tremendous reward,” said Holly Shimizu, executive director.

The originating plant collection of the USBG was formally placed under the direction and control of the Joint Committee on the Library in 1843. In 1856, in recognition of their increasing stature, the collections and their associated operations and facilities were officially named the United States Botanic Garden. The Joint Committee on the Library has exercised its supervision through the Architect of the Capitol since 1934.

The Garden serves more than 700,000 visitors each year. Its public facilities are located on the U.S. Capitol complex and include the Conservatory, the National Garden, and Bartholdi Park. Its living collections comprise nearly 8,000 taxa including more than 67,000 plants. Significant holdings include orchids, economic plants, native plants of Hawaii, and plants of the mid-Atlantic region.

The United States Botanic Garden Conservatory is open to the public, free of charge, every day of the year from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. The Conservatory is located at 100 Maryland Avenue, SW, on the west side of the U.S. Capitol. Visitors are encouraged to take Metrobus and Metrorail. Further information is available by calling (202) 225-8333 or visiting www.usbg.gov.

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