IDEA Cafe: Disability Inclusion at Gardens

On October 3, 2022, attendees at APGA’s monthly IDEA Cafe shared the following practices in response to the following prompt:

**What’s one inclusive practice you’d like to share with other gardens and outdoor museums?**

**Digital Inclusion**
- Adding alt text to all social media posts with photos
- Accessibility page on website with resources for visitors
- Online “tours” of behind the scenes collections

**Universal Design of Physical Spaces**
- Universal accessibility especially for bathrooms, rest areas and pathways
- Wider pathways
- Raised beds, cutouts, and accessible paths
- Our vegetable garden features raised beds designed for people using wheelchairs or individuals unable to stoop or squat
- Designating relief areas for seeing eye dogs and service animals

**Wayfinding**
- Visitors are able to navigate the space without having to ask a staff member
- Universally accessible signage and maps, including multiple languages, tactile and braille
- Map showing the difficulty of different paths, and also a written list of areas in the garden that are considered accessible with descriptions of the path surfaces
- Marking benches and other rest points on a site map
- Create a map of accessible paths and areas
- All-gender/gender-neutral bathrooms with clear signage

**Multimodal Engagement**
- Varied horticulture therapy programs
● Accessible sensory gardens
● Making more parts of the garden where people can touch plants
● Our garden has an “enabling garden” with adaptive tool displays that showcase accessible gardening techniques

**Accessible Services and Accommodations**

● Barrier breaking by offering free shuttle transportation and passes not just for daily visitation, but also for events
● Having portable, reliable and lightweight seating available for people to use as needed
● Quiet hours
● S.P.A.R.K. (Sensory Processing and Autism Resource Kit) Backpacks
● Develop and provide a social narrative for visiting the Garden

**General Guidance and Staff Training**

● Don’t make assumptions about a person’s disabilities. Ask visitors what they need or want.
● Training staff and volunteers to engage in respectful ways
● Greeting all visitors with eye contact, a welcome, and a smile
● Considering neurodiversity when interacting with visitors (ie. ADHD and Autism)
● Assess audience and adjust accordingly
● Staff training offered by various communities that could benefit from accessible welcome practices

This document was gathered and assembled by staff from Turnstile Studio and Brooklyn Botanic Garden.