

Looking to the Future

Sara Levin Stevenson

Looking ahead to the next twenty-five years, what are the greatest challenges and opportunities that public gardens will face?

Our ongoing challenge is relevancy. As public gardens, we need to constantly find new ways to connect plants and the environment to the everyday lives of our visitors. We need to demonstrate that plants are essential for human survival, while inspiring environmental action and providing opportunities for participation.

These sentiments are nothing new, however. We've been saying these things for decades. How can we ensure that we won't be repeating the same message at APGA's one hundredth anniversary? I would love to see gardens reach out beyond their boundaries and collaborate even more frequently with other public institutions. By working with neighborhoods, schools, local governments—and especially other gardens—we can create opportunities to both hone our skills and connect with more diverse audiences.



What can gardens do to overcome these challenges and take advantage of these opportunities? What role could APGA play?

As a public garden community, we can spend more time focusing on where our strengths overlap and use our pooled resources to support each other. We can leverage our network through APGA and find innovative ways to work together, not to create uniform programs, but rather to create a joint effort that is rolled out in our individual gardens and communities in unique ways. We are all united around similar goals of conservation and the importance of biodiversity. We are all trying to reach our communities and make a measurable difference in the world. The more we can do to create a coalition, the better we will be able to make a meaningful impact on the public.

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