

Additional Content for Backbone: Multi-Disciplinary Cultivating Change

We invited commentary from the directors of several gardens. Here are their thoughts.

Would you like to add yours? Please answer the following questions, and send to *Public Garden* Editorial Advisory Group member Frederique Lavoipierre at lavoipierref@gmail.com:

- How do you envision cultivating change in your garden?
- What change are you most interested in implementing?
- Have you integrated behavior change into strategic planning at your institution?
- Thoughts on the role of public gardens in changing behavior?
- Additional comments?

Garden Director Interviews

**Jeff Downing, Executive Director
Mt. Cuba Center**



Mt. Cuba Center strives to inspire people to connect with nature and begin to see the symbiotic connections between plants, animals, and people, so that they might go home and garden more in harmony with nature's systems.

Primarily, Mt. Cuba hopes to motivate people to start incorporating native plants into their landscapes. Start with a few. See if you like them and if they're supporting more butterflies and bees. If so, add a few more.

Inspiring action is core to our mission. One of the four overarching goals of Mt. Cuba's strategic plan is to "Motivate conservation action." For the past three years we've had an environmental psychology fellow at Penn State helping to analytically assess how best to motivate community action and to evaluate how well it's working.

If our gardens are committed to conservation, and we all are in our own ways, then there is great value in leveraging our communities to join us in stewardship. Small, simple actions often lead to bigger commitments. Public gardens can lead the way by articulating behavior changes that make a difference, providing effective nudges, removing barriers to action, and evaluating our effectiveness at motivating our communities.

**Steve Windhager, Executive Director
Santa Barbara Botanic Garden**

Because horticulture can cut across political divides, Botanic Gardens have the opportunity to raise issues associated with conservation and sustainability to an audience that might not otherwise be receptive. We are hoping to use our onsite experience to begin a conversation with our guests that can be expanded upon in our programming, social media, and other communication materials all leading to changes in behavior and improved conservation efforts and ecological sustainability for the community. The hard part is really finding ways to track this to know if you are successful.

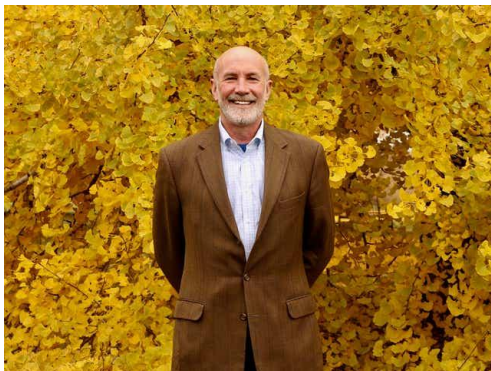


Our “gateway” change is elimination of the use of invasive species in their home landscape, and incorporation of more native species. We feel that these are small changes that, when done for the sake of the environment, can lead to other changes in lifestyle that can further protect biodiversity on the planet.

The Garden utilizes a behavior change model that seeks to moves people from casual visitor towards an engaged “choir” and have developed experiences, classes, and programs for the public along this attitudinal transect. Our goal is to meet people where they are and move them toward a greater fulfillment of our mission.

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**Mark Wourms, Executive Director
Bernheim Arboretum**



Cultivating change at Bernheim – Bernheim works to bring visibility, understanding and actionable steps regarding major social/scientific issues, such as the global climate crisis. Bernheim starts with connecting people with nature (our mission) by providing the opportunity for everyone to find their own niche, fulfill their own needs in nature. We strive to be a trusted source of science-based information. We strive to discuss current issues, so everyone can relate and understand the basics of the

problem/issue. We strive to provide steps everyone can take that will make a difference – particularly if millions of people take the same steps. We start by engaging children with nature through “free play,” which then draws in their parents. Finally, we model behavior and positive change in our projects and practices.

Bernheim is concentrating in three areas of change: 1. To convince people to convert portions of their lawns/landscapes into native plants/habitat which will support native bees, pollinators, and insects. 2. We are striving to be energy efficient while working to move to on-site solar energy as our primary energy source. 3. Encourage everyone to take steps in their homes and landscapes to reduce energy and water use, and to protect ground and surface water.

We have four Big Ideas in our Strategic Plan. One is “Leadership in Ecological Stewardship” where we model best practices and behaviors throughout our organization. Another, “Thought Leadership” allows us to test ideas, convenes people and groups to discuss or work on issues. Finally, Bernheim incorporates the third Big Idea “Actions Beyond our Borders” by working with people in their own neighborhoods and communities. These big concepts all encourage behavioral change.

Bernheim is willing to take risks – try new ideas! We are not afraid to fail and love to learn. This culture keeps us in change, in growth – which may demonstrate and encourage behavioral changes in our staff, volunteers and visitors. We can only hope, because we have not worked to measure behavioral changes, but hope to in the future.