HISTORY
Located on the banks of the Schuylkill River in Southwest Philadelphia, Bartram’s Garden is the home of the nation’s first great naturalist and explorer, John Bartram (1699–1777). A Quaker farmer and self-taught naturalist, Bartram had an insatiable curiosity about the natural world; this “botanick fire” fed his desire to make a “compleat discovery” of the native flora of the Americas. His travels ranged from Florida to Nova Scotia, and his farm was a living laboratory that included his collected plant specimens. He grew an international plant business and welcomed the leading minds of his day to exchange expertise, insights, and plants. His children and grandchildren continued the tradition of farming and enterprise until 1850, and their legacy of discovery, knowledge exchange, and entrepreneurship drives the mission of the John Bartram Association.

Today Bartram’s Garden is a National Historic Landmark that encompasses 45 acres of tidal wetlands, a reclaimed meadow, a botanic garden, community farm, and the Bartram’s original farm buildings. The John Bartram Association has operated the garden in partnership with the City of Philadelphia since 1893. It welcomes nearly 50,000 visitors annually, including more than 10,000 local children and families who participate in hands-on environmental education. Vision 2025 leverages significant capital investment and the arrival of the regional Schuylkill River Trail by 2018, and we anticipate welcoming more visitors than ever before to the garden’s natural beauty and respite, riverfront amenities, and growing community programs.

MISSION
The mission of the John Bartram Association is to protect and enhance the landmark Bartram’s Garden and House, advance the Bartram legacy of discovery, gardening and art, and inspire audiences of all ages to care for the natural world.

VISION
Destination as a river garden
Bartram’s Garden is the premier urban river garden that connects people to their waterways, history, culture, and food. With our location as the only public access point to the tidal Schuylkill in Philadelphia, we are recognized regionally, nationally, and internationally as a model for environmental education, urban agriculture and food sovereignty, and 21st century preservation that integrates culture and recreation. We connect visitors to the sanctuary and wonders that the natural world offers, and inspire learning through rich experiences in horticulture, food ways, history, and river ecology.

Through innovative design and programming, visitors will experience a dynamic shoreline and diverse landscape that interprets the vital role the river has played in the history of the land and a changing urban environment. Featuring educational, agricultural, interpretive, and recreational spaces linked to landscapes both cultivated and natural, the river garden showcases the river as a sustaining force and connector to the Bartram family and our community today.
In the spirit of exchange and inquiry that defined the Bartram family, the garden’s history will serve as the foundation for unlocking the potential of an urban garden, farm, river, and trail. The restored, vegetated shoreline will interpret the Bartram legacy and its global impact, and drive dynamic programming that integrates the garden’s diverse landscape and programs.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES
I. Horticulture: “Nature Appears Beautiful to Me”
   Carrying on our botanical heritage, leading the way in the propagation and cultivation of the Bartram plant collection, and incorporating them to reestablish healthy land and river ecosystems to showcase best practices in conservation and watershed management.

II. History: “A Compleat Discovery”
   Balancing preservation with access, preserving and protecting our historic and natural resources to the highest level of stewardship, while demonstrating the relevance of the Bartram legacy in a 21st century urban riverfront community.

III. Community and Education: “With My Own Two Hands”
   Engaging and empowering our stakeholders through site-based educational programs and personal experiences that draw inspiration from the Bartram traditions of curiosity, natural wonder, exchange and self-learning.

IV. Agriculture and Food Sovereignty: “The Fruits of My Contrivance”
   Foster cultural exchange in our neighborhood using our roots in farming to explore food culture, deepen our community’s relationship with the land, their food, and each other, providing an inclusive and welcoming place for people to develop tools for self-reliance through food sovereignty.

V. Enduring Sustainability: “A Power for Usefulness”
   Sharing a love of nature with generations to come by building capacity and leadership through collaboration, innovation, and the advancement of our vision as a premier urban river garden.

MULTI-YEAR GOALS
I. Horticulture: “Nature Appears Beautiful to Me”
   John Bartram and his descendants appreciated nature in all its forms, whether “small, ugly, or handsome, or sweet.” Visitors will experience our diverse landscapes and ecosystems, and rare access to the restored tidal Schuylkill shoreline, sparking a deeper connection to nature and the importance of safeguarding its future. Through on-site propagation, we will showcase the 1783 Bartram plant collection comprehensively, revitalize our landscape and restore the Garden’s legacy of plant exchange that will enrich visitors’ own gardens. Exemplify excellence in horticulture by showcasing best management in all aspects of seasonal presentations, landscape restoration, urban agriculture, and freshwater wetland ecological restoration while emphasizing the responsible use of resources.

GOAL 1: Acquire and propagate plants listed in the 1783 Bartram plant catalog and utilize them as part of the 2025 master plan to restore the historic, cultural and ecological landscape of the Garden.
GOAL 2: Be a global leader in disseminating scientific information about the Bartram family’s plant collection, share and exchange knowledge for the purposes of ecological restoration and landscape restoration.
GOAL 3: Restore the tidal Schuylkill riverfront as a living shoreline that features freshwater tidal plants and provides healthy habitat for flora and fauna.

II. History: “A Compleat Discovery”
Visitors in the 18th century found that John Bartram’s garden reflected his personality – colorful, creative, generously informative, and always welcoming – and this tradition continued as subsequent generations of the Bartram family influenced scientific and horticultural discovery. Ensuring that our natural and historic resources receive the highest level of stewardship will be our benchmark as we interpret the Bartram legacy within the context of a 21st century urban riverfront environment. Visitors will experience this legacy today through meaningful engagement, creative endeavors, and inviting stories that feature our irreplaceable landscape and shoreline. As our nearest neighbors and partners, our Southwest Philadelphia community will actively guide programs and interpretation that strengthen our mission.

GOAL 1: Revitalize the historic core to showcase the Bartram horticultural and agricultural legacy, their entrepreneurial plant propagation business, extensive plant collecting expeditions, their livelihood as farmers, and their writings that shaped the plant industry for generations. Preserve our natural and historic resources, and the physical infrastructure, to meet new standards of excellence in stewardship.
GOAL 2: Connect the Bartram’s love of nature to today’s sustainability and conservation needs through permanent and seasonal exhibits, hands-on and participatory workshops, and collaborations with artists and performers who make the garden’s rich history come alive. Make the Bartram story more accessible and engaging with new audiences who connect to the garden through the recreational use and farming.
GOAL 3: Be the research center for the Bartram collections, developing a comprehensive management, engagement, and communication plan. Showcase the archaeological and ecological processes and surveys, and establish forums for scholarly pursuits with academic partners.

III. Community and Education: “With My Own Two Hands”
John Bartram was a self-made man whose personal compass was trained on hard work, deeply felt beliefs, and high accomplishment. Visitors, local families, students, and trail users will enjoy hands-on learning and engagement, through environmental educational field trips, fishing on our restored shoreline, growing fruits and vegetables in a working urban farm, or joining a bee-keeping or botanical illustration workshop.

Bartram’s Garden was a favorite destination in the 18th and 19th centuries for those who wished to learn about plants, enjoy an ice cream social, or gain some respite from the urban hustle and bustle. We will provide a place of pleasure and inspiration, balancing access with preservation as we share the history, culture, and talent that Southwest Philadelphia has to offer. Visitors, trail users, and our neighbors will always find something new as they enjoy their active riverfront, and we will showcase exemplary standards in horticultural care, outstanding amenities, diverse programs, and
engaging recreational activities. Our partnerships locally, regionally and beyond reflect the Garden’s vision as a place for creative engagement, and a destination that is sought out for high quality artistic and scientific collaborations that engage our expanding audiences.

**GOAL 1:** Enhance visitor experience and community engagement through a youth-driven approach to interpretation, community-based agriculture and food production, cultural programs, recreational activities, and a range of amenities that provide support for our expanded audiences.

**GOAL 2:** Reach beyond our boundaries through programs and partnerships to engage our community in transformative experiences that promote learning, celebration, enjoyment, and exchange, and help envision a revitalized Bartram’s Village, working with the Philadelphia Housing Authority to ensure that the garden is a green resource and community connector.

**GOAL 3:** Leverage the new recreational trail and serve as the Southwest Philadelphia gateway to the Schuylkill River and Philadelphia park system, providing programs and stewardship to ensure that the trail is a beloved local resource and the garden is our community’s outdoor family room.

**GOAL 4:** Nurture the next generation of stewards through hands-on education and career training opportunities that explore the connections between people, plants, and river ecology. Through institutional partnerships and academic collaborations, position the Garden as a hub for experimentation, research and field studies that deepen understanding of urban ecology, agriculture and nutrition, and freshwater tidal ecology. Provide communities with greening and gardening knowledge and know-how and empower them to improve their own homes and communities.

IV. Agriculture and Food Sovereignty: “The Fruits of My Contrivance”
John Bartram transformed barren, sandy soil into a flourishing farm that fed his family and surrounding community through innovation and the force of his own industry. Our community will cook meals for each other in our communal kitchen, swap seeds and grow plants that reflect their heritages and food ways, and tend their own garden plots at the garden and their homes. Local students achieve academic success and mentor each other as they manage the crop farm, weekly farm stands, and intergenerational gardening and cooking workshops.

**GOAL 1:** Establish an exemplary food production and education center that integrates community meals, seed and plant exchange, intergenerational learning about cooking and food culture, and wellness resources for Southwest Philadelphia residents. Increase access to fresh, organic, and nutritious fruits and vegetables to local communities by providing proximity, affordability, cultural context, and culinary exchange. Build a more just and community-powered food system through replicable and sustainable models of farming, youth development, and community engagement.

**GOAL 2:** Deepen our community’s relationship with the land, their food, and each other, providing an inclusive and welcoming place for people to develop tools for self-reliance through food sovereignty. Explore food culture and history, especially for those of African heritage, through the lens of the Bartram farm and the growth of industry in Philadelphia.

**GOAL 3:** Expand youth development by establishing a fellowship and apprentice program that promotes academic success and career training, engaging students from the Southwest community and use this youth-powered model as a model for food sovereignty, community engagement and environmental stewardship.
V. Enduring Sustainability: “A Power for Usefulness”
John Bartram’s love of nature and growing things has fueled generations of curious minds who turn the soil for inspiration, sustenance, and recreation. Visitors, donors, and stakeholders will support our continued usefulness and relevance as we build capacity and leadership through collaboration, achieve the highest standards in green organizational management and innovation, and fulfill the advancement of our vision as a premier urban river garden. The Association will grow as a high-achieving organization recognized for its green practices, achieving the highest levels of stewardship through ongoing management, self-assessment, and resourceful and collaborative leadership.

**GOAL 1:** Develop and implement a business plan that supports the river garden vision through diverse earned income streams, as well as a robust individual giving program that leverages board leadership and increases volunteerism and membership, endowment, and a growing operational infrastructure.

**GOAL 2:** Build and sustain an exemplary 21st century workforce that develops youth leaders from the Southwest community; a dedicated, creative and collaborative board and staff leadership; and a vibrant volunteer stewardship base.

**GOAL 3:** Develop and implement a communications campaign to support the river garden vision, leveraging recent capital investments and expanding audiences to enhance the garden’s visibility as a local resource and national model for preservation, and community engagement.

**GOAL 4:** Lead the public-private alliance that envisions the future of publicly-held buildings on Botanic Avenue, and working in partnership with the City of Philadelphia, the Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation, and community leaders, positions them as a riverfront destination and public amenity for the lower Schuylkill.

**MEASURES OF SUCCESS BY 2020**

1. **A Beloved River Garden:** We actively engage the surrounding community by providing education, programs, employment and a welcoming, healthy environment for recreation, relaxation, learning, nutrition and culture that is focused on the Bartram legacy and our unique tidal river access.

2. **Learning by Doing:** We serve as an outdoor classroom and laboratory for an extensive range of programs for early childhood to post-graduate students, providing opportunities for local youth to develop and lead programs as part of their education and job skill training. River ecology, urban agriculture, and environmental science drive curriculum and cultural activities for students, adult learners, and citizen scientists. Opportunities for deeper research on ecology and the garden’s collections will attract a new generation of Bartram Scholars.

3. **A Story of Enterprise and Stewardship:** A cohesive narrative engages visitors to experience diverse activities on-site and online, inspiring growing numbers students, local residents, volunteers, members, and advocates to become knowledgeable and active stewards of Bartram’s Garden.

4. **Recognized for Excellence:** Bartram’s Garden is noted as a destination locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally as a leader in horticultural excellence, preservation, community-based engagement, and urban agriculture and food sovereignty.
5. **A Youth-Powered Model for Urban Agriculture:** Bartram’s Garden will work with local youth to develop their life skills as they meet the needs of our community, serving as a 21st century farm and food production hub that promotes health and self-sufficiency for local families. We will achieve a sustainable and replicable model of youth led and locally-based urban agriculture.

6. **A High-Performing Organization:** Through effective fund development, volunteer engagement, and exemplary governance and management of its assets, Bartram’s Garden is an organization on solid financial footing. A successful fundraising initiative to develop the elements of Vision 2025 and support the endowment, plus an increase in earned revenue will ensure appropriate stewardship of historic collections, infrastructure, and future growth.

**CONTEXT FOR PLANNING**

John Bartram chose well in establishing his homestead along the lower Schuylkill. Linked by the river to the center of the city, and the center of the emerging country, his was a sprawling landscape and working farm that provided sustenance to his family, gardens and greenhouses for his botanic collections and transatlantic trade, and a welcome country refuge to the leaders of America’s burgeoning democracy.

The garden is a public space in the midst of an underserved community that has seen heavy industry and disinvestment, and our neighborhood has the highest rates of poverty, truancy, crime, obesity, and hypertension in Philadelphia. It is a welcoming green respite from these challenges, and is open year-round to nearly 50,000 visitors annually. We offer a free and low-cost tours and workshops, environmental education for 9,000 local school children, outdoor performances and festivals, boating, fishing, and community farming.

The John Bartram Association has achieved significant milestones that have increased access, visibility, and engagement for our growing audiences. In 2016, we completed a $2.7 million historic house and garden restoration that introduced geothermal heat sourcing to the historic buildings, transformed our entrance, and broadened our interpretation to feature John Bartram’s granddaughter, Ann Bartram Carr, and her exotic nineteenth century garden and nursery business.

As part of the Lower Schuylkill Master Plan, and the implementation of the first phase of the Bartram Mile section of the river trail that is underway, Southwest Philadelphia is transforming into a modern 21st century riverfront industrial district, with Bartram’s Garden as its centerpiece. By 2018, the trail will be connected to Schuylkill Banks on the eastern side of the river via a pedestrian bridge at Grays Ferry. Visitorship to the Garden could easily triple when this connection is completed.

The Association take very seriously our obligation to advance the mission and steward the land and legacy at Bartram’s Garden, while providing our surrounding community with access to the beauty, serenity, and inspiration of the natural world. Even as we develop a long-term vision for the River Garden, and prepare for greatly increased visitation through trail use, we maintain our commitment to our core mission. We plan to enlighten new generations with the contemporary interpretation of the Bartram family’s defining role in the natural history of America’s botanical heritage. Working with the highly regarded Woodland Academy, we are developing a unique early
childhood education program that connects pre-school children with the natural wonders of Bartram’s Garden. Through our partnership with Mural Arts, the Southwest community will engage with local artists and connect with the river through artistic interventions that lead them to our River Garden. Bartram’s Garden will provide the physical, inspirational, and programmatic nexus for the planned expansion of green space and amenities along the waterfront through the Bartram’s Mile and Schuylkill Banks connections. The Garden also serves as the “backyard” and riverfront access for thousands of local residents in Southwest Philadelphia.

As Bartram’s Garden develops as a community anchor and destination, we remain committed to the spirit of entrepreneurship and stewardship that is core to our mission. We will restore our tidal riverfront and our historic garden, deepen our educational and cultural program partnerships and, through exemplary leadership, ensure that the garden is a beloved destination for generations to come.