

2024 Impact *Report*

 The NORTH CAROLINA
ARBORETUM
SOCIETY





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Visionaries

Honoring the Legacy of Founding Director, George Briggs

In July 2024, The North Carolina Arboretum honored the retirement of founding director, George Briggs after 37 years of service. In 1987, George began planting roots in Western North Carolina, inspired by Frederick Law Olmsted's innovative genius of creating multi-dimensional natural gardens and landscapes. The mark he has made is everlasting.

It's hard to imagine that the Arboretum began by operating out of an old bank trailer in the woods and now has recently been recognized by Newsweek magazine as America's Best Botanical Garden. George attributes the Arboretum's success as "a reflection of the Arboretum's two visionary boards, 150 dedicated staff and 350 committed volunteers."

"In the arboretum world, George Briggs is a pioneer species. He's been breaking new ground and seeding grand ideas at The North Carolina Arboretum for 37 years, growing its impact in education, research, and conservation. George's patient vision has made the Arboretum a true gem for the UNC System and the state of North Carolina."

- UNC President Peter Hans

A Word From New Executive Director, Drake Fowler

George Briggs was the catalyst that took the grand vision of many and skillfully guided the realization into a treasure for all of us to enjoy. When Frederick Law Olmsted designed Central Park, he understood the critical human need to connect with nature. The North Carolina Arboretum is our state's connection to nature, both physically and intellectually.

As we look ahead to the future, we will continue to protect this truly unique and beloved place. We will strive to connect and inspire the next generation to pursue knowledge and higher education to continue to unlock nature's secrets. It is an honor to continue the forward momentum that will advance our mission and vision, making The North Carolina Arboretum a keystone organization in the state of North Carolina's offerings.

Drake Fowler, Executive Director





Who we *Are*

The heart of the Arboretum is the 600,000+ annual guests, members, students and visitors that come through the front gate each year. But the welcoming of those visitors would not happen without the devotion of the heart-filled staff and volunteers that make the gears turn across our 434 acres.

Mission:

Advancing our state's future by creatively connecting people, plants and places through education, design and economic development.

The North Carolina Arboretum is:

Staff

Volunteers

State Board of Directors

Society Board of Directors

University of North Carolina System Affiliate





By the *Numbers*



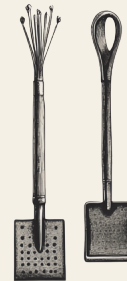
600,000+ VISITORS



21,000+ MEMBER HOUSEHOLDS



1,600+ PHILANTHROPIC DONORS



350+ VOLUNTEERS



525,000+ WEBSITE VISITORS



25 COMMUNITY PARTNERS



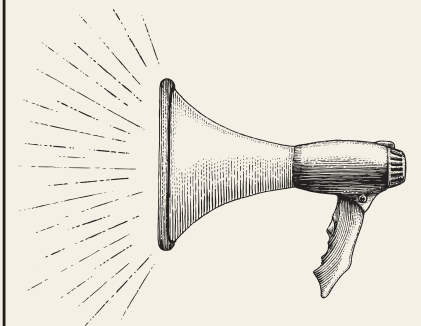
100,000+ EDUCATIONAL IMPACT



14 GRANTORS



33,000+ NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIBERS



63,000+ FOLLOWERS



Growing *Education*

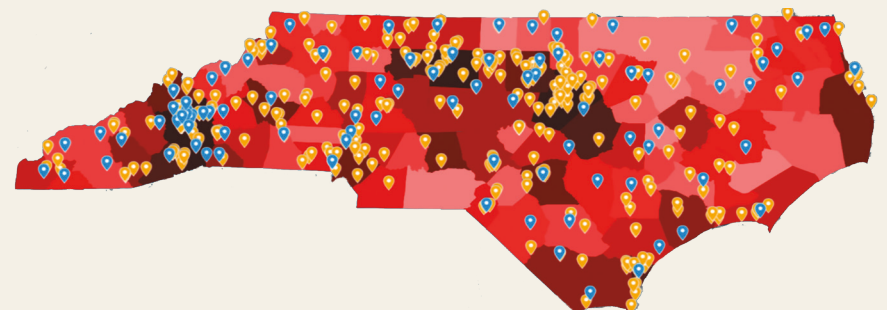
The North Carolina Arboretum offers year-round educational programs and learning experiences for adults, families, youth, school groups, and trade professionals that focus on environmental sustainability, art, science and economic development.

Youth Education Highlights

- 21,000 observations submitted by ecoEXPLORE participants of wild plants, animals and fungi to the iNaturalist online network, totaling over 89,000 observations to date.
- 120 teachers and 5,880 students from 67 schools engaged through Project EXPLORE's weekly outdoor community science programs aligned with the NC Standard Course of Study.
- Project PEACE delivered programming for students of diverse audiences, including for Asheville City Parks and Recreation, Project Lighten Up at Rock Hill Missionary Baptist Church, New Kituwah Academy and Cherokee Central Schools.
- Partnerships: NC Museum of Natural Sciences, Greensboro Science Center, NC State Parks, NC Aquariums, the NC Zoo, and over 400 other local parks, libraries and educational institutions.

Adult Education Highlights

- 250+ programs offered, investigating natural history & ecology, horticulture, arts in nature, & wellness on campus, both online and in the field.
- Engaged over 100 instructors in Adult Education Programs: Arboretum staff, local & regional scientists, naturalists, gardeners, artists, authors & more.
- Arboretum Certificate of Merit Programs celebrate two milestones: The graduation of the fall class in 2024, and the upcoming 20th anniversary of the Blue Ridge Naturalist program in 2025. Both the Blue Ridge Naturalist & Blue Ridge EcoGardener certificates will undergo maintenance in Winter 2024-25 to ensure the programs remain relevant, accessible and sustainable.



EcoEXPLORE HotSpots and LoanSpots, which promote wildlife observations and provide observation equipment, are located across all 100 counties and the Qualla Boundary.

Donor and member support helps us *Grow.*



Conservation

Surrounded by the botanically diverse Southern Appalachian Mountains and encompassing 434 acres, conservation is at the forefront of horticulture at The North Carolina Arboretum, preserving and improving the biodiversity of our region.

National Native Azalea Collection

The Native Azalea Collection is an 8-acre woodland landscape dedicated to the conservation of North America's deciduous *Rhododendron* species. As a nationally recognized collection by the American Public Garden Association, the Collection represents nearly every species native to the U.S.



Over the past year, under the direction of new curator, Carson Ellis, the Native Azalea Collection expanded programming and cultivation through collaborative partnerships and new dedicated nursery space for azalea propagation. In May, the Collection hosted its second Native Azalea Day event. Over 500 visitors had the opportunity to participate in guided tours, try hands-on activities, and engage with collaborators.

With the support of the Collection's first intern, 24 collection trips were made across North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Alabama, in search of native azaleas. Cuttings were collected from over 88 specimens and additional specimens were marked for seed collection on return trips in the fall. The Native Azalea Collection now has several hundred azalea seedlings and cuttings in cultivation.

Willow Pond

Willow Pond is a donor-supported innovative wetland landscape for outdoor learning and exploration at The North Carolina Arboretum. Managing stormwater to benefit wetland plants and wildlife, the site serves as a pillar of the Arboretum's innovative approach to sustainable land management.

Over the last year, the Arboretum introduced two new volunteer programs for Willow Pond monitoring water quality and supporting horticulture. With support from these volunteers to monitor and care for the landscape, Willow Pond celebrated many successes including:

- First year without an algae bloom in the spring.
- First bloom for *Eryngium aquaticum*, an aquatic variety of Eryngium, also commonly called Sea Holly.
- Notable monarch activity, including observations of caterpillars and adult monarchs.





Philanthropy

Membership

One of the most important sources of income for The North Carolina Arboretum Society is Membership support. The North Carolina Arboretum Society averaged over 21,000 member households in 2024. An Arboretum Membership comes with benefits associated with multiple levels from Individual to Benefactor, such as early access to events, the annual garden party, and the reciprocal garden network across the U.S.

75%
Private Funds



25%
State Funds

Philanthropic Gifts

Donors who give generously beyond their Arboretum membership set a philanthropic example of support that reflects your advocacy and dedication to our organization. The Arboretum thrives because of you. Your support makes an impact on our communities, our region, and our state.



Supporting the ONE Fund is the best way to directly impact the Arboretum's pivotal areas:

ORGANIZATIONAL

Supporting the heart of the mission and vision

NATURAL

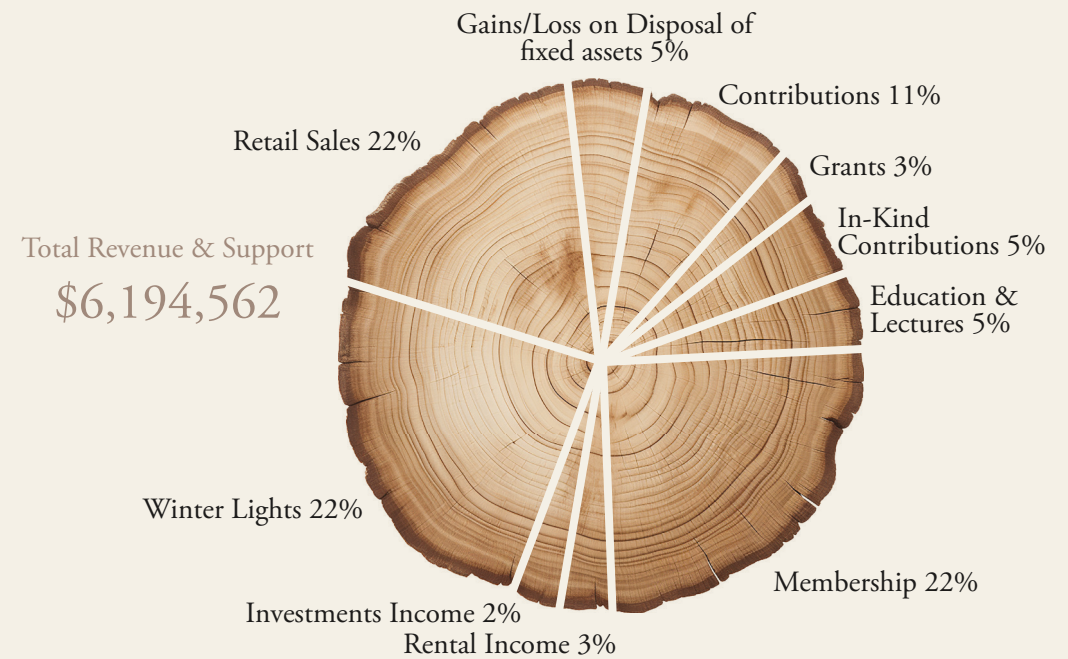
Supporting the natural areas, gardens and trails

EDUCATIONAL

Supporting the educational programs, exhibits and outreach



2023-2024 *Financials*



Support Services 12%



Total Expenses
\$6,194,562



Partners in the *Field*

The commitments of regional and national grantors and corporate Community Partners enrich the experiences and lifelong learning of citizens in our region and across the state.

In the 2023-2024 fiscal year, 14 active grantors provided \$289,062 in support, with six newly-awarded grants primarily focused on education programming for underserved youth. 25 Community Partners donated more than \$380,000 in cash and in-kind services.

Active Grantors

The Chaddick Foundation

Cherokee Preservation Foundation

The Community Foundation of Western North Carolina

Dogwood Health Trust

The Ecology Wildlife Foundation

French Broad River Garden Club Foundation

North Carolina GlaxoSmithKline

Pisgah Investments Foundation

Walnut Cove Members Association

Others not listed for anonymity purposes

2023- 2024 Community Partners

Asheville Citizen Times

B.B. Barns, Inc.

Bailey Nurseries

Bartlett Tree Experts

Biltmore Farms LLC

Explore Asheville Powered By
Buncombe County Tourism
Development Authority

Camilla Calnan Photography

Carolina Living Choices

Clark Communications

Fjallraven Asheville

Hawksridge Farms Inc.

Henco North Creative Imaging

iHeartMedia Inc.

Jolly Gardener Pro-Line

K2 Services Inc.

Lamar Outdoor Advertising

The Laurel of Asheville

Mosaic Community Lifestyle Realty

RomanticAsheville.com

Sineath Construction

Smoky Mountain Living

Spectrum Reach

Tanger Outlets Asheville

Engagement

Engaging the community through events, exhibits, weddings, garden parties and more, is just one way that The North Carolina Arboretum lives out its mission of connecting people with plants and place. No matter which department is leading the effort, the Arboretum aims to welcome all, enriching lives and making a difference in the community and region.

Engagement Opportunities of 2024:

Great Backyard Bird Count Day
Annual Plant Sale
Annual Garden Party
Azalea Day
Adult Education Classes
Youth Education Camps and Activities
Lectures
Mountain Science Expo
Great American Eclipse
Weddings
Arbor Evenings
Facility Rentals
Bloom with a View
Orchid Festival
World Bonsai Day
George Briggs Celebration Events
Founder's Day
Winter Lights
And more!





Hurricane *Helene*

The region of Western North Carolina suffered immeasurable damage in September. Our deepest thoughts go out to the many communities that suffered due to Hurricane Helene. With over 10,000 trees down across the Arboretum property, and flooding at the front entrance gate, clean-up efforts at The North Carolina Arboretum will be ongoing.

Arboretum Staff worked alongside NC State Officials, UNC System Partners, FEMA, and the Army Corps of Engineers to clear thousands of downed trees, allowing the Arboretum to reopen the core garden area to the public in a limited capacity

after a month-long closure. In response to the devastation caused in our region, the Arboretum waived the standard vehicle entrance fee in an effort to provide a place of refuge for people to connect with nature once again. Trails, forested and natural areas will reopen as they are cleared and made safe again. Through its rehabilitation efforts the Arboretum will continue to preserve and improve the biodiversity of our region. As Western North Carolina continues to recover, we will do what we do best, connecting people to plants and place.

Helene Impact

- 10 ft of flooding at main entrance
- 10,000+ trees down
- \$1,000,000 in revenue lost during closure
- \$1,000,000 in projected restoration costs



Looking *Ahead*

Leave a Legacy

The *Legacy Trust* is a new society for planned giving at The North Carolina Arboretum. By making a planned gift or supporting an endowment at the levels below, you can extend your commitment to The North Carolina Arboretum Society in perpetuity. Planned gifts, whether large or small, reflect an extraordinary and forward-looking sentiment, ensuring that future generations will continue to experience and enjoy plants, gardens, trails, conservation, education and all that's possible at the Arboretum.



Gift Types

Donors who make the following types of gifts are welcomed into the Legacy Trust:

- Planned gifts such as bequests, life income gifts and charitable trusts
- Newly established named endowments at the \$25,000+ level
- Endowment gifts at the \$25,000+ level

Connect With Us in 2025

Would you like to learn more about The North Carolina Arboretum? Would you like to get to know our Executive Director? Would you like to learn what initiatives are on the horizon? If so, a member of our Development Team would be happy to arrange a visit or tour for you. Contact us at development@ncarboretum.org or 828-665-2492.





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