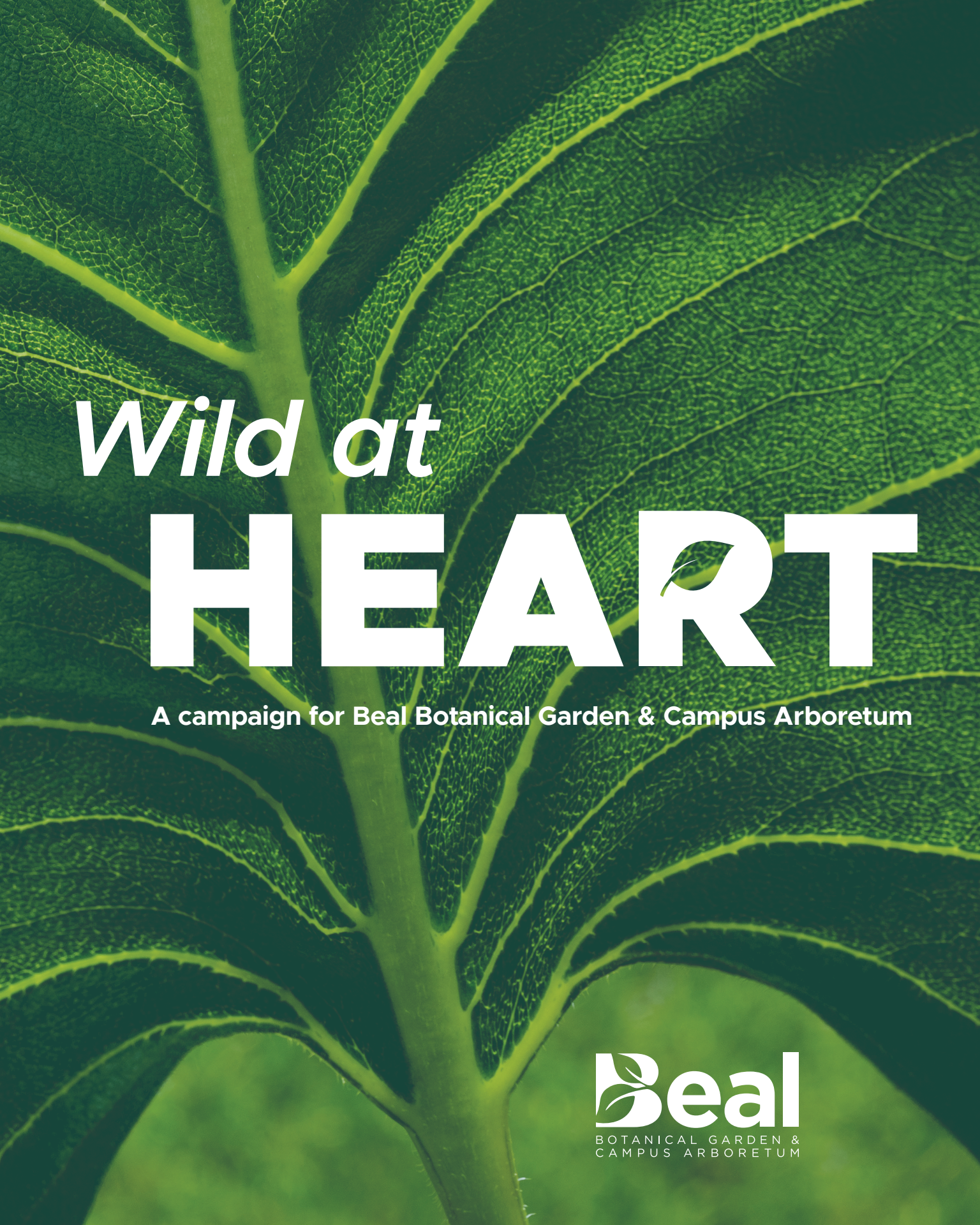

Wild at
HEART
A campaign for Beal Botanical Garden & Campus Arboretum
Beal
BOTANICAL GARDEN &
CAMPUS ARBORETUM



Dear friends,

I'm sure I don't need to tell you—you already know if you're reading this—but Beal Botanical Garden is a very special place.

For over 150 years, this living laboratory has encouraged learning and exploration of the natural world and illuminates the interconnectedness of people, plants, and place. With a collection of over 2,000 plants from around the globe positioned in the heart of MSU's campus along the Red Cedar River, the Beal Botanical Garden offers natural greenspace to advance research, teaching, wellbeing, and public engagement.

A truly thriving ecosystem is composed of many interconnected parts, growing together. While the name of our garden honors the legacy of one, it has taken countless individuals to bring the garden to where it is today. For whatever role you have played in the garden throughout your life—because your support, your participation, and your presence all make a difference—we thank you. Whether you visit the garden to learn about plants and nature, to relax and nurture your wellbeing, to participate in our multitude of programs, or to be with friends and family, you help create a community that connects all of us.

> As we look to the future, our team has been reflecting on the mark these years will leave on this cherished space in collaboration with members of the communities we serve, and we are honored to share a vision for the Beal Botanical Garden that advances opportunities for deeper interconnection between people, plants, and place while also bringing the garden back to its roots.

Planting a seed is a way of putting something into the Earth, giving it life, and acknowledging that its impact may continue well beyond when you are gone. Let's plant some seeds together—in honor of those who came before us, and for generations into the future.

Alan Prather
Director

OUR WILD GARDEN

Beal Botanical Garden and Campus Arboretum illuminates the interconnectedness of people, plants, and place through learning, research, and stewardship.

Did you know we were once known as the “wild garden?” Established in 1873, the Beal Botanical Garden is the oldest continuously operated university botanical garden in the United States. The garden is listed on the Michigan State Register of Historic Places and it is the only Michigan garden to earn prestigious accreditation from Botanic Gardens Conservation International. With this accreditation, they join an accomplished group of just over 100 international botanical gardens that have demonstrated success in conservation of plant species, inspiring people, sharing knowledge, and addressing global challenges.



This free and publicly accessible living laboratory in the heart of MSU’s campus encourages learning and exploration of the natural world. With a dynamic collection of over 2,000 botanical species situated on the Red Cedar River, the garden advances research, teaching, and discovery for Spartans and the surrounding community. The garden also manages the university’s arboretum, ensuring MSU is one of the greenest campuses in the nation—home to over 20,000 trees.







THINGS WE’RE PROUD OF:

- Visitors from **more than 1,100 zip codes** come to Beal Botanical Garden each year.
- Beal Botanical Garden is a living laboratory for student learning. The garden has **increased course engagements by over 300%** in the last two academic years.
- Each year, Beal Botanical Garden hosts around **100 free public programs**—some of which creatively bring the peace and tranquility of the garden into other spaces across campus during the winter months.
- In true Spartan fashion, our community loves to give back—volunteers clocked **over 600 service hours** prepping soil, planting, and caring for Beal Botanical Garden.
- With BGCI accreditation, Beal Botanical Garden is **part of an accomplished group of just over 100 international botanical gardens** that have demonstrated success in conservation of plant species, inspiring people, and addressing global challenges.
- The garden **supports students of all majors** through its Beal Scholars program, which offers paid, mentored professional experience in botanical garden operations.
- A 2025 study of visitors found that the garden was widely perceived as peaceful, with **97.7% reporting feeling moderately to extremely serene** when visiting.

SOWING THE SEEDS



Draft rendering of the Beal Botanical Garden master plan. The layout is inspired by the many meandering forms from the historic Beal Botanical Garden plan of 1895.

Part of why we were once called the “wild garden” is because originally, Beal Botanical Garden was more natural and focused on native Michigan plant species. As we envision our future, what the garden will grow to become, getting back to our roots has become a priority. By re-wilding the garden, we can bring a dose of nature right to the heart of campus. Together, we will return to our roots *and* plant seeds for our future, making campus more sustainable and enhancing community wellbeing at MSU.

Your support will also enable the transformation of the heart of campus to a place that fosters wellbeing for MSU students and community members more than ever before. Nature is a part of our campus, linked to the larger whole by the Red Cedar River. By changing our landscape through your support of the Wild At Heart campaign, you are welcoming nature and inviting people to connect to the garden in a new way. The changes that your support will make to the garden are centered around a thriving ecosystem, reshaping the role of the garden and illuminating interconnectedness between people, plants, and place.



It is a rare opportunity to do something that not only helps a beloved space on campus grow, but also return it to its roots. With your support, the sustained impact this project will make on future generations of Spartans and members of our surrounding communities will be profound.

By re-wilding Beal Botanical Garden together, we can:



- Activate and maintain a world-class plant collection
- Support the research and learning of all students, regardless of major, now and well into the future
- Facilitate opportunities for transformative experiences through immersive landscaping
- Support biodiversity, conservation, and environmental sustainability
- Foster community-building, belonging, and wellbeing
- Model riverbank stewardship, supporting species diversity, erosion reduction, and habitat health
- Cultivate collections in ways that are accessible to everyone

PLANTING PARTNERSHIPS FOR GREATER IMPACT

Beal Botanical Garden's dedication to research and education ensures they are not only a trusted source for understanding plant sciences, but also a place of transdisciplinary discovery for all students and faculty. As its landscape continues to grow and change, its evolution is in part shaped by the community it serves. The garden is a valued partner on campus research efforts that in turn shape the garden for future generations.



One example of this reciprocal relationship is The Earthseed Project, a research initiative between Michigan State University and Georgia Institute of Technology that recently received significant funding from the Mellon Foundation. The project uses Afrofuturist literature to connect horticulture, climate resilience, and food sustainability knowledge and practices. The MSU end of the project led by Kinitra Brooks, MSU Professor of English and Audrey and John Leslie Endowed Chair of Literary Studies, who in turn reached out to partner with Beal Botanical Garden. Together as part of the Earthseed Project, they will create a Conjure Garden that will feature plants used in spiritual and medicinal practices passed down through generations of Black Southern and Caribbean women and enslaved people.

The garden is also serving as a site of programming for the project—together with Brooks, they hosted community reading groups of Octavia Butler's "Parable" series, which served as the inspiration for the project. The events encouraged reflection on the themes in Butler's work, encouraging participants to find tangible ways to reconnect with the ways they are rooted to the land, both literally and metaphorically. Each person received graphic novels of the "Parable" series and their own wild strawberry plant to cultivate.

Turning the theory into the practice is how we practically help people. We're teaching them to garden, teaching them how rootwork and conjure operated, but also how they can bring the 'Parable' series of books and botanical knowledge into their own homes and gardens.

– Kinitra Brooks, MSU Professor of English and Audrey and John Leslie Endowed Chair of Literary Studies

The Earthseed Project will culminate in three years with a Conjure Symposium in Beal Botanical Garden in fall 2027—bringing together practitioners, scholars, and community members.

It is through research partnerships like these that the garden continues to come alive with opportunities to explore the connections between people, plants, and place across disciplines. Shaped by the communities it serves, new beds that support research such as the Mellon grant-funded Earthseed Project are just one example of the ways in which Beal Botanical Garden fosters a sense of collective ownership and collaborative stewardship of the land it inhabits.





From plant science and sustainability to arts and the humanities, discover how different disciplines and communities are shaping the future of Beal Botanical Garden.

ROOT YOUR LEGACY IN BEAL BOTANICAL GARDEN

The next chapter of Beal Botanical Garden's history is made possible by people like you. With your support, the Beal Botanical Garden will continue to be a beloved oasis in the heart of MSU's campus.

In recognition of your generosity, and to ensure the MSU community, public, plant lovers, researchers, and more are made aware of your investment, our team will:

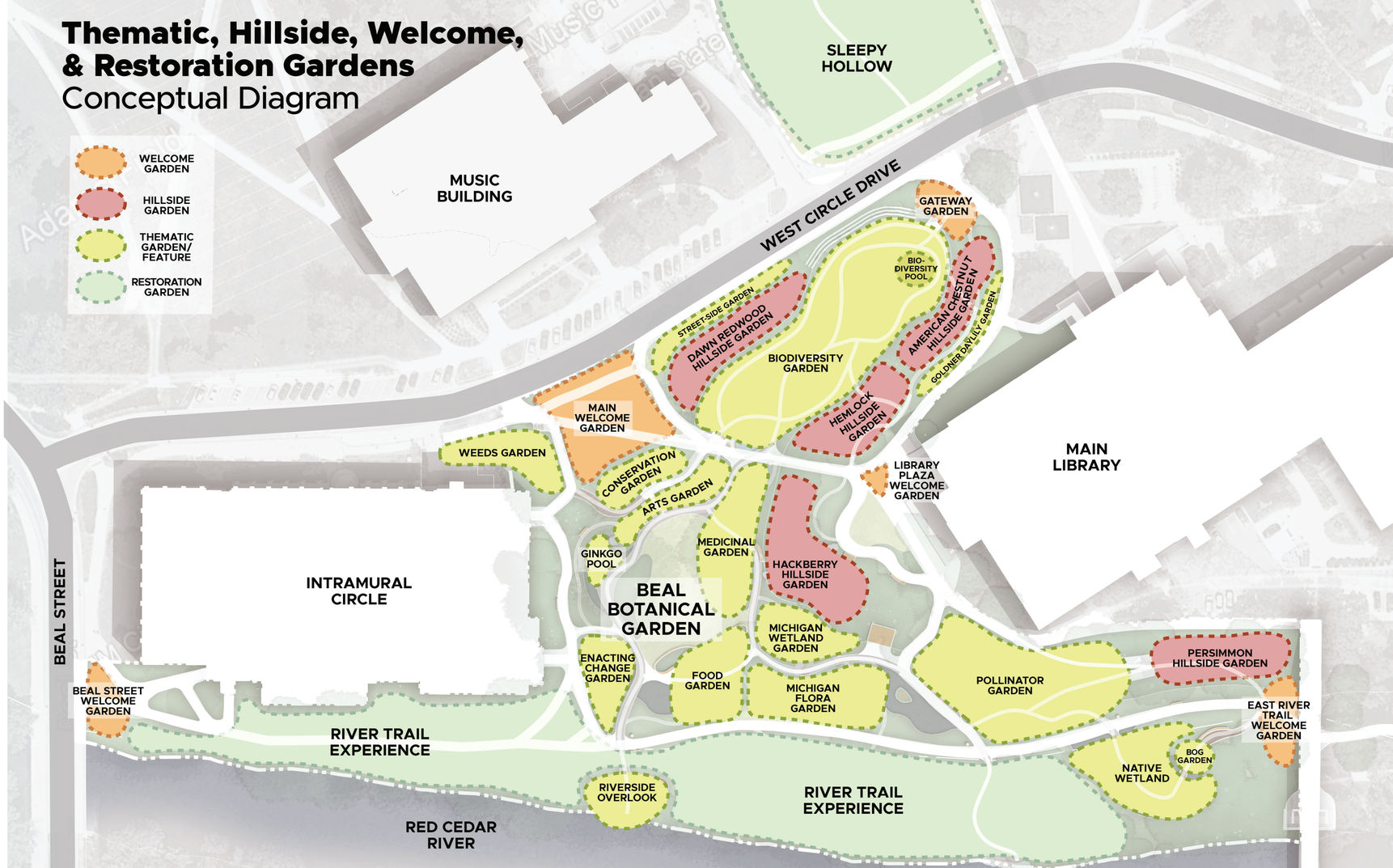
- Provide name recognition on permanent in-garden signage
- Recognize your gift on our website, newsletter, and anywhere else donors to the Beal Botanical Garden are named
- Include you in exclusive University events and experiences only available to those who support MSU at these levels

> **I'm interested in donating to areas that can help students gain life experience that otherwise might not be available to them. The Beal Botanical Garden was an easy choice and as a bonus, it is situated in my favorite part of the campus. The garden offers something for everyone.**
>
> *– Daniel Latham, MSU Alum and Beal Botanical Garden donor*

Ready to make a difference?

Contact Liz Ivkovich, Senior Director of Advancement, Cultural Arts
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Thematic, Hillside, Welcome, & Restoration Gardens
Conceptual Diagram



MICHIGAN STATE
UNIVERSITY

Printed on 100% recycled paper. Go Green.



> **It's critically important that students today connect with nature. We give to the garden because we want students to realize it's not all concrete and textbooks. There's much more to life.**
>
> *– Ron Raade, MSU Alum and Beal Botanical Garden donor*



