



2007-2008 ANNUAL REPORT



LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friend of the Wildflower Center,

Last year, the Austin Business Journal ran a cartoon showing two people sitting safely on a tree limb while wolves labeled “Recession,” “Inflation” and “Market” snarled below. One person was saying to the other, “This looks like the only safe place to be.” The tree was labeled “Green Initiatives.”

The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center has been occupying that safe place for 26 years now, but never has there been more opportunity to expand our unique role as a national leader in environmental sustainability. Our initiatives—the Sustainable Sites project, collaboration with the Millennium Seed Bank, research on green roofs and carbon sequestration by native grasses, training citizen scientists to identify and control harmful invasive plants, introducing urban children to nature through the First Bloom partnership, our native plant gardens and education programs—are projects that make a difference in the world. We’re gratified that interest in sustainable practices and sustainable landscapes is growing so rapidly.

Wildflowers and native plants are the cornerstone of sustainable outdoor spaces. Every day we are discovering more about their value and the ways in which they can

help us all benefit the environment. Never has the need for this work been greater.

In 2007-2008, our second year as a part of The University of Texas at Austin, we took on some new challenges and met the benchmarks we set for ourselves. We are grateful for the support from members, contributors and friends that made this year so successful.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan Rieff". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, stylized 'S' and 'R'.

Susan K. Rieff
Executive Director

OVERVIEW

THROUGHOUT ITS 26 YEAR HISTORY, the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center has been committed to conserving and promoting native plants and landscapes, not just for their unique beauty but for the vital role they play in maintaining a healthy environment. By demonstrating the potential for native plants to thrive with less water, pesticides, fertilizer and energy, the Center has helped drive public perception and consumer practices toward more benign landscaping practices that respect regional conditions and foster a more sustainable Earth.

In the 2007-2008 fiscal year, the Wildflower Center explicitly adopted sustainability as the philosophy that drives all of our work. As Lady Bird Johnson recognized decades ago, we must find ways to bring into harmony the needs of nature and the needs of man. For the Wildflower Center, this means that in all of our work—education, outreach, horticulture, consulting and research—we are finding ways to apply our expertise in native plant biology to address the most critical environmental challenges of our time, including water scarcity, water and air pollution, loss of native flora by invasive species and even global climate change. Our education programs are teaching the value of sustainable natural landscapes to parents and teachers, and through them, helping create the next generation of land stewards.

This was an extraordinary year for the Wildflower Center, our second year as a part of The University of Texas at Austin. The Center was honored to be invited by the United States Botanic Garden in Washington, D.C. to host an exhibit honoring Mrs.



Johnson's contributions to conservation as a part of a months-long exhibition on sustainability. With support from the university, we were able to design a beautiful and fitting tribute that drew rave reviews from the hundreds of thousands of visitors to the exhibition. We found new partners across the nation, helping launch the First Bloom program with the National Park Foundation and welcoming four new organizations as affiliates. We enhanced our national visibility through our leadership in combating invasive plants, banking seeds, guiding sustainable landscaping and expanding our unique on-line Native Plant Information Network. Our media coverage, local, national and global, grew tremendously and helped draw nearly 100,000 visitors to our gardens and exhibits.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE YEAR

Sustainable Sites Initiative

The Wildflower Center created the Sustainable Sites Initiative in 2005 with its partner organizations, the American Society of Landscape Architects and the United States Botanic Garden, to promote sustainable land development and management. In November 2007, the Initiative issued its first “Preliminary Report.” More than 450 organizations and individuals across the country responded by submitting comments for review. Those were evaluated this year and incorporated into the “Sustainable Sites—Guidelines and Performance Benchmarks Draft 2008” released in November 2008.

Wildflower Center staff direct the project, managing a nationwide network of technical advisors and partner staff who are developing guidelines and measures of sustainability for planned landscapes. These guidelines can apply to open spaces such as parks, conservation easements and buffer zones, as well as sites with buildings, such as streetscapes, corporate and academic campuses and botanic gardens. The program is intended to extend the concepts behind existing “green building” programs to the landscapes surrounding those buildings.

The Initiative is receiving tremendous attention and positive comments from architects, designers, builders, the nursery industry, the conservation community and others. The U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) anticipates incorporating these guidelines and performance benchmarks into future revisions of the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Green Building Rating System™.



Sustainability Research and Demonstration Projects

The fundamental idea supporting the Wildflower Center’s research and off-site consulting program is that native plants used in sustainable design can not only mitigate environmental damage, but even improve the ecological performance of a given site. The Center accepts consulting projects that provide opportunities to test research findings and demonstrate sustainable approaches on a large scale. Two projects completed this year are particularly significant. The original site design plan for the new headquarters of Advanced Micro Devices (AMD) was redesigned by the Center’s staff to preserve sensitive natural features, minimize harmful environmental impacts and demonstrate sustainable

landscaping. More than 2,000 plants were excavated from the site during construction, maintained at the Wildflower Center then replaced at their original location. At the site of Austin's former Mueller municipal airport, the Center is a key consultant in the design of a new 700-acre multi-use redevelopment, successfully promoting the use of native plants throughout the site and restoring blackland prairie to a 20-acre park.

With financial support from Wal-Mart Inc., the Center expanded research to develop and test alternative native grass mixes that could be a practical and more sustainable alternative to St. Augustine, Bermuda grass and other conventional lawn grasses used in the Southwest.



Millennium Seed Bank

As plant diversity is threatened by development, climate change and invasive plant competitors, seed banking provides a hedge against plant extinction and a source of genetic material for future research. The Wildflower Center's contribution to the international seed banking project, the Millennium Seed Bank, as well as the federal government's seed bank, expanded tremendously. While originally our role was collecting seed from plants in the Edwards Plateau, our target area now includes nearly all of Texas and potentially parts of Oklahoma. In 2007-2008, Center staff and trained volunteers have collected nearly 1.5 million seeds (10,000 to 20,000 per species) from 113 priority species.

Plant Invaders

Invasive plants are the second greatest threat to native plants and landscapes, following only land disturbance and development. The Wildflower Center's comprehensive approach to this growing problem is both regional and national. At the state level, our staff led a successful effort to establish a new Texas Invasive Plant & Pest Council, which includes representatives from the nursery industry, state agencies and conservation organizations. Our Invaders of Texas program has trained 81 new "citizen scientists" to increase the total number to 319. These skilled volunteers spent 1,838 hours mapping and reporting 2,867 observations of harmful invasives in their communities. At the national



level, the Center is a leader in PlantWise, an interagency initiative aimed at educating people about invasives. Also our senior botanist was appointed by the Secretary of the Interior to serve on the Invasive Species Advisory Committee of the National Invasive Species Council.

First Bloom

In collaboration with the National Park Foundation (NPF), the Wildflower Center convened leaders from across the country to develop a community model for First Bloom, a new project aimed at connecting children in urban areas to nature in their national parks and to opportunities to create their own gardens. In January, staff from the Battery Conservancy and Boys and Girls Clubs of America and the National Park Service

in five cities learned about native plant conservation, restoration and gardening during a 3 1/2 day workshop at the Center. In April, First Lady Laura Bush participated in the first First Bloom event in New York City. The Center is now assisting the NPF in expanding the program nationwide by providing more training sessions in selected cities.

Go Native University

Responding to the demand for more information and training about native plant gardening, the Center expanded Go Native University to offer additional classes in addition to its certification program in native plant horticulture. Last year, we filled 677 seats and generated over \$22,000 in income from the program. Under development for Spring 2009 is a series of new classes on sustainable landscaping modeled after the Sustainable Sites Initiative.

National Outreach

We are achieving our goal of being recognized as the nation's premier voice for native plants and landscapes. Visits to our upgraded website, www.wildflower.org, reached 2.5 million in 2007-2008, an increase of nearly 1 million from the previous year. We added an innovative feature, Ask Mr. Smarty Plants, to the Native Plant Information Network, that allows visitors to pose questions and get answers from staff and volunteer experts. Mr. Smarty Plants now appears regularly on the garden pages of both the *Austin American-Statesman* and the

Houston Chronicle online. Using more sophisticated media tools which target scientific audiences, we received extensive coverage of our research findings in international outlets including *Nature*, *Science Daily*, Britain's *Energy Efficiency News*, India's *Economic Times Daily*, *Physorg*, and *Firstscience*. We were also highly successful in attracting general national and regional media attention, particularly for the Sustainable Sites Initiative.

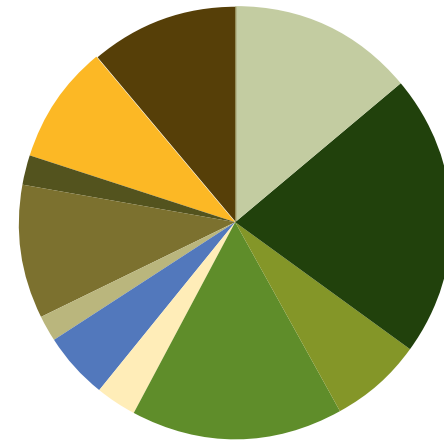
The environment is where we all meet;
where all have a mutual interest; it is the
one thing all of us share. It is not only a
mirror of ourselves, but a focusing lens
on what we can become.

Lady Bird Johnson



REVENUES FOR FY 2007-08

REVENUES	2007-08
MEMBERSHIP	\$599,400
DONATIONS	929,800
ADMISSIONS	288,100
STORE	692,300
PLANT SALES	146,200
FACILITY RENTALS	231,700
PROGRAM REVENUES	70,400
CONSULTING AND CONTRACT GRANTS	431,400
MISC.	74,900
ENDOWMENT	380,300
RESTRICTED FUND DONATIONS/GRANTS	499,000
TOTAL REVENUE	\$4,343,500

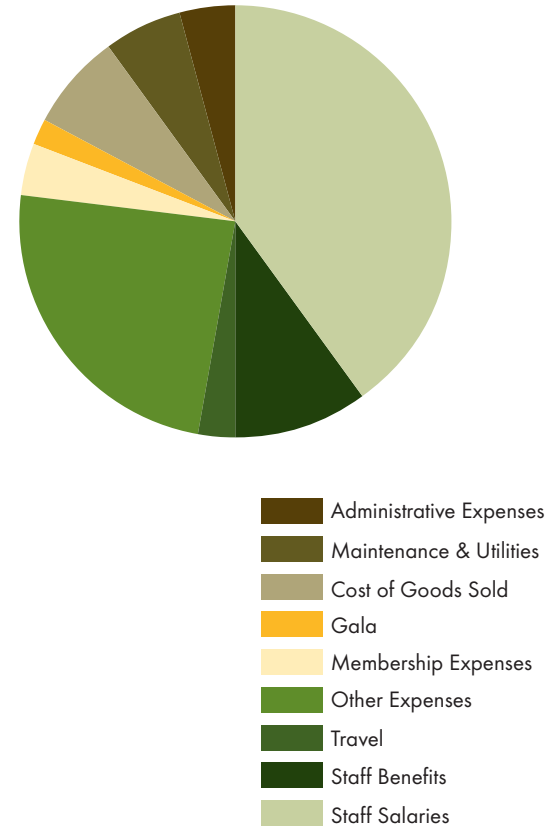


EXPENSES FOR FY 2007-08

EXPENSES

STAFF SALARIES	\$2,019,000
STAFF BENEFITS	497,700
TRAVEL	151,600
OTHER EXPENSES	1,210,900
MEMBERSHIP EXPENSES	212,200
GALA	82,000
COST OF GOODS SOLD	377,500
MAINTENANCE & UTILITIES	325,500
ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES	188,000
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$5,064,400

Expenses include amounts carried over from previous year.



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