



## FRANKLIN PARK CONSERVATORY AND BOTANICAL GARDENS Media Kit

Revised 3/23/2026

### OVERVIEW

Franklin Park Conservatory and Botanical Gardens is Central Ohio's premier botanical garden and home to the iconic John F. Wolfe Palm House, which dates back to 1895. Located just east of Franklin Park, the Conservatory is approximately two miles from downtown Columbus.

The visitor experience spans approximately 13-acres comprising the Conservatory building, the Scotts Miracle-Gro Foundation Children's Garden and the Grand Mallway. Guests will explore botanical biomes, lush gardens, special horticulture and art exhibitions, and seasonal offerings. A collection of glass works by artist Dale Chihuly is also on display and included with admission.

The Scotts Miracle-Gro Company Community Garden Campus is a sprawling 4-acre garden adjacent to the visitor experience that encompasses an apiary, rose pavilion, berry house and 40 community garden plots as well as an education pavilion and demonstration kitchens. This area is open to the public at no charge from dawn until dusk.

### MISSION

As a premier botanical garden destination, we connect people to nature and create life-enhancing experiences.

### VISION

Envision a world that celebrates nature as essential to the human experience.

### VALUES

Our values are what we stand for – what we believe – and how we behave. They inform everything that we do and how we interact with the community and each other.

- **Belonging**  
*We strive to make all people feel valued, welcomed, and included.*
- **Creativity**  
*We encourage original thinking to solve problems and inspire growth.*
- **Collaboration**  
*We use partnership, teamwork and diverse perspectives to drive shared goals and collective success.*
- **Stewardship**  
*We practice responsible management and care to ensure sustainability and well-being.*

### ATTENDANCE

Franklin Park Conservatory and Botanical Gardens welcomes nearly 400,000 guests annually from Central Ohio and beyond.

## **ADMISSIONS AND MEMBERSHIP**

### **General Admission:**

Children (ages 2 & under): Free

General (ages 13-59 years): \$24 + Culture Fee \$1.20= \$25.20

Children (ages 3-12 years): \$16.50 + Culture Fee \$.83 = \$17.33

Seniors (ages 60+ years): \$20 + Culture Fee \$1.00 = \$21.00

Parking: Free

### **Special Engagement Admission:**

Children (ages 2 & under): Free

General (ages 13-59 years): \$27 + Culture Fee \$1.35 = \$28.35

Children (ages 3-12 years): \$16.50+ Culture Fee \$.83 = \$17.33

Seniors (ages 60+ years): \$23 + Culture Fee \$1.15 = \$24.15

Parking: Free

*\*Prices are subject to change.*

### **Access Programs:**

Franklin Park Conservatory strives to be an inclusive and accessible facility. For this reason, the Conservatory has created the following Access Offerings.

- Community Days at the Conservatory: The first Sunday of each month is free for residents of Franklin County and the City of Columbus during regular operating hours of 10am to 5pm.
- Museums for All: Participants in SNAP, EBT, WIC, Medicaid & Access Members receive \$4 General Admission and Special Engagement Admission.
- Access Family Membership for families in eligible programs with proof of participation: CareSource, Ohio Directions card, Medicaid card, W.I.C. card or Molina card. Franklin Park Conservatory Access memberships are available by mail or at the Visitor Center only.
- Temporary Memberships are available to be checked out from certain branches of Columbus Metropolitan Library, Pickerington Public Library, Fairfield County District Library, Southwest Public Library and Upper Arlington Library. These grant two adults and up to six children onsite member benefits, including free General Admission.
- In 2025, we provided 80% off scholarships to 33 Nature School students.
- In 2025, we provided 80% off scholarships to 26 FPC summer campers.
- In 2025, we provided 3,314 100% off scholarships for CCS students to attend field trips. We also provided 1,126 50% off scholarships to students from any district who met free & reduced lunch requirements.

### **Membership:**

Franklin Park Conservatory and Botanical Gardens membership offers many benefits to guests who visit. Membership revenue supports the Conservatory's exhibitions, programs and community outreach initiatives.

### **Membership Levels:**

**Access Membership** – A reduced rate family membership for families in eligible programs with proof of participation: CareSource, Ohio Directions card, Medicaid card, W.I.C. card or Molina card.

**Senior** – Admits one individual age 60 and over.

**Individual** – Admits one named individual listed on the membership card.

**Duo** – Admits two named adults listed on the membership card. Senior Duo Membership, available for adults ages 60+.

**Family** – Admits two named adults as well as all children or grandchildren ages 18 and under listed on the membership card.

**Family Premium** – Family benefits, plus free admission for up to 2 guests attending with the member(s).

*\*Prices are available online and subject to change.*

## **HOURS OF OPERATION**

Franklin Park Conservatory and Botanical Gardens is open year-round, closed only on Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

### **Hours of Daily Operation:**

10am to 5pm except for *Pumpkins Aglow & Conservatory Aglow* when daytime admission hours are 10 am to 4pm

### **Hours for Special Engagements (exhibitions and events occurring after 5pm) are:**

- **Chihuly Nights** - On select evenings throughout the year: 6pm to 10pm (please visit our website for more details)
- **Pumpkins Aglow** - On select evenings in October: 5pm to 9pm with extended hours on **Friday & Saturdays** (please visit our website for more details)
- **Conservatory Aglow** - Begins mid-November through January: 5pm to 9pm with extended hours on **Friday & Saturdays** (please visit our website for more details)

*\*Hours are subject to change.*

## **GOVERNANCE**

Comprised of up to 25 members, the Board is appointed by the City, County, Governor, Speaker of the House, and State Senate from the Columbus community and business leaders to exercise authority over Franklin Park Conservatory Joint Recreation District. The Conservatory's Board advises, governs, oversees policy and direction, assists with leadership and general promotion, and supports the Conservatory's mission and needs.

## **COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND EDUCATION**

### **Outreach Programs:**

Franklin Park Conservatory and Botanical Gardens is dedicated to spreading horticulture knowledge and appreciation beyond the confines of the park. Through community outreach programs, the Conservatory is helping to create new edible gardens, city beautification projects, and home gardens throughout the community.

Growing to Green has supported over 300 community gardens across Central Ohio and provides over 40 garden plots to Conservatory neighbors. The Teen Corps program provides growth, education, and workforce development opportunities for local youth. The Farmers Market brings fresh produce to the east side of Columbus while supporting local growers, artisans and food trucks. Head Start and Columbus City Schools Summer Camps bring STEAM education and access to nature to local youth populations.

### **Classes:**

Whether it's gardening best practices or cooking the perfect wood-fired pizza, classes at the Conservatory are fun, hands-on and truly unique. The Conservatory offers a full menu of classes and workshops in gardening, cooking, fine art and crafts throughout the year. For the younger audience, the Conservatory provides hands-on, interactive programs for kids of all ages.

### **School Programs:**

Bring learning to life at the Conservatory. School groups from Pre-K through high school enjoy active learning experiences with native and exotic plants, insects, birds, science, the environment and the arts that correlate to ODE Academic Content Standards.

### **Hot Shop:**

Housed in a covered outdoor pavilion in the North Courtyard, the Hot Shop features glassblowing daily demonstrations by local, professional gaffers. The gaffers will walk you through every step of the glassblowing process as they gather molten glass and transform it into a finished piece of artwork.

### **STAFF**

The Conservatory's staff consists of nearly 100 full-time and part-time employees.

### **VOLUNTEERS**

An estimated 700 volunteers give their time and talent to the Conservatory each year.

### **HORTICULTURE AND GARDENS**

The Conservatory's vast gardens pulse with life and bring the truly exotic wonders of nature to the forefront. Explore over 400 species of plants from around the world in the Conservatory's biomes or simply marvel at the intricate glasswork of Dale Chihuly.

### **Biomes:**

Experience the planet's natural diversity in the Conservatory's biomes. From the arid deserts of the American Southwest to the hot and humid Amazon Rainforest, the biomes allow you to explore these ecosystems right in the heart of central Ohio.

### **Dorothy M. Davis Showhouse: UNDER CONSTRUCTION THROUGH FALL OF 2027**

Built in 1895, this historic glass house is often the focal point of the Conservatory's special horticulture displays. Changing with the seasons and with the exhibitions presented at the Conservatory, the Showhouse lends itself to creative horticulture designs and magnificent floral displays throughout the year. On either side of the Showhouse are two rooftop gardens, the Zen Terrace and The Grove, which were added in 2008.

### **John F. Wolfe Palm House: UNDER CONSTRUCTION THROUGH FALL OF 2027**

The John F. Wolfe Palm House and connecting Dorothy M. Davis Showhouse are the oldest portions of Franklin Park Conservatory and Botanical Gardens. The design of this grand Victorian-style glass greenhouse, built in 1895, was influenced by the success of Chicago's World Fair and Columbian Exposition in 1893 and inspired by the City Beautiful movement.

### **The Scotts Miracle-Gro Foundation Children's Garden:**

This 2-acre garden is the largest horticulture project ever undertaken by the Conservatory. Featuring numerous unique, interactive experiences celebrating the Ohio landscape, the Children's Garden focuses on introducing and connecting children to the natural world, as well as renewing that connection for their parents and caregivers.

The Children's Garden supports the Conservatory's outreach and education mission, promoting active learning for all ages, with emphasis on health and the natural sciences.

### **Botanical Gardens:**

Guests can view the abundant outdoor gardens full of seasonal color and interest on any day of the year.

- Main Entrance Gardens - Seasonal displays welcome you as you approach the entrance to the Conservatory. Hundreds of colorful bulbs emerge in early spring, followed by annuals and container displays. The 30-foot Greenscapes Live Wall is visible through the windows.
- Crane Conifer Garden & Ornamental Grass Collection - The Crane Conifer Garden & Ornamental Grass Collection displays diversity among coniferous plants and grasses. The collection is located between the Conservatory and the Community Garden Campus. The collection showcases a variety of forms, sizes, textures, colors, blooms, and fruiting bodies.
- The Grand Mallway - The more formal gardens on the Grand Mallway feature pathways lined with abundant perennial beds. The NavStar, created by artist Stephen Canneto, has become a landmark sculpture and icon of the Conservatory.
- Ohio Hybridizers' Daylily Garden - Visit the Ohio Hybridizers' Daylily Garden from late spring and through the summer to view 850 varieties of blooming daylilies. Arranged in beds by the decade from when the cultivars and species were introduced, this space to the south of the entry plaza erupts with color while illustrating the history of this very popular plant.
- The Wells Barn Gardens - The Wells Barn Gardens are a collection of gardens designed to complement the architecture, style and beauty of The Wells Barn. The plants in this garden fit within numerous garden themes such as natives, sustainable gardening, wildlife attracting, four season interest and sensory gardening.
- The Scotts Miracle-Gro Company Community Garden Campus - Visit Scotts Miracle-Gro Company Community Garden Campus for beauty and inspiration. Designed as a living classroom and idea center, this four-acre garden provides creative resources for anyone interested in gardening and edible landscapes. Explore the culinary, herb and fragrance gardens, apiary, rose pavilion, berry house, and 40 community garden plots. Take a cooking class in the demonstration kitchen or watch a chef demonstration at the Live Fire Cooking Theater.

### **WEDDING AND EVENT VENUES**

Franklin Park Conservatory and Botanical Gardens is the perfect place to host an event. From breathtaking venues to lovely decor and vendor options, you'll be sure to leave your guests talking about a night (or day) they'll never forget.

The Conservatory specializes in weddings, corporate and social events and provides everything from events planners to catering to décor.

### **HISTORY**

**1852** - Franklin County Agricultural Society first held the county fair in today's Franklin Park.

**1874** - After years of expansion, the park became the state fairgrounds, hosting the Ohio State Fair for 12 years.

**1880** - August 11, General William Tecumseh Sherman delivered his famous statement "War... it is all

hell,” in a speech to a reunion of 60,000 Civil War veterans and spectators gathered at the fairgrounds.

**1885** - The fairgrounds hosted the Ohio State Fair for the final time and were then abandoned.

**1886** - May 17, the Ohio State Legislature passed a resolution declaring the former fairgrounds open for public use, making it the largest city park in Columbus. It was soon named Franklin Park.

**1893** - The grand Victorian glass palace at the Chicago World's Fair inspires the design for Franklin Park Conservatory.

**1895** - The original Franklin Park Conservatory (known today as the John F. Wolfe Palm House) was constructed and opened to the public

**1921** - A fire in Columbus City Hall destroyed many of the early records of Franklin Park and Franklin Park Conservatory. Much of the history has been documented from newspapers and personal written accounts.

**1926-1931** - Animals were given winter shelter at the Conservatory while the Columbus Zoo was built at its current location in Powell, Ohio. Reindeer were kept on the park grounds, and the Conservatory's Lower Concourse held lions, monkeys, tigers, bears, and reptiles.

**1974** - The original glass house was inducted into the National Register of Historical Places.

**1986** - November 14, *AmeriFlora '92* was organized and incorporated, and Franklin Park was named as the host site for the horticulture exhibition.

**1989** - Renovation of the historic structure and a \$14.5 million expansion of the facility began. New additions included four biomes from around the world, gift shop, classrooms, library and café. February 14, The United States Christopher Columbus Quincentenary Jubilee Commission sanctioned *AmeriFlora '92* as an official 1992 commemorative event.

**1991** - April 10, Legislation was passed by the Ohio State Legislature that recognized Franklin Park Conservatory as a joint recreation district.

**1992** - April 20, *AmeriFlora '92* opened and closed on October 12. In December, the Franklin Park Recreation District, a private not-for-profit organization, reopened with a new, 10-member board of trustees.

**1994** - Thousands of exotic butterflies took flight in the Pacific Island biome for the debut of Butterfly Garden: Something Rare in the Air, known today as *Blooms & Butterflies*.

**1996** - The board of trustees expanded to 17 members, and in cooperation with Conservatory staff, developed a comprehensive strategic plan and mission statement to ensure its success.

**2003-2004** - *Chihuly at the Conservatory*, a blockbuster exhibition of work by renowned glass artist Dale Chihuly, drew record crowds. Friends of the Conservatory, a private, non-profit group that supports the Conservatory's programming, purchased most of the artwork in the *Chihuly at the Conservatory* for permanent display at the Conservatory. It was valued at nearly \$7 million.

**2005-2008** - A Master Plan was developed and a capital campaign to support it was completed and construction began on additions to the Palm House that added rooftops garden and a rentable space

adjacent to a Bride's Garden. Artist James Turrell designed and installed *Light Raiment II*, a permanent work that illuminates the John F. Wolfe Palm House every evening from dusk until dawn.

**2009** - The second project of the Master Plan, the four-acre Scotts Miracle-Gro Company Community Garden Campus, was completed on the southeast corner of Franklin Park to serve as a home for the Conservatory's Growing to Green community gardening program and related educational offerings. The new space was introduced with weekend events including the first Field to Table dinner, planned and hosted by the Conservatory's Women's Board.

**2009-2010** - The Conservatory exhibited new work and reimagined its permanent collection of Dale Chihuly's glass artwork. In the fall of 2010, an exhibition developed and produced by the Conservatory's exhibitions team and Torkworks Studio, Savage Gardens, opened. In the years since, this experience that introduces and interprets the world of carnivorous plants has traveled to seven botanical gardens around the country.

**2011** - The final project of the first phase of the Master Plan was the completion of a production greenhouse, a facility that expanded the Conservatory's growing capacity and storage of its horticulture collections.

**2012** - Artist Aurora Robson, whose artwork draws attention to the impact of plastics and other disposable consumer items, opened an 8-month exhibition in September 2012.

**2013** - Legacy exhibitions continued to draw visitors: *Orchids, Blooms & Butterflies*, and *Merry & Bright* celebrated the seasons, providing memorable experiences for all visitors. The board and leadership team of the Conservatory completed the development of a vision for the future, and the next phase of the Master Plan, named Master Plan 2.0, went into development. In the fall, a full-facility installation by British light artist Bruce Munro opened to positive reviews and introduced new audiences to the Conservatory during this memorable nighttime experience.

**2014** - 70,000 spring flowering bulbs installed by the Conservatory's horticulture designers and staff in 2013 burst open with color and drew new visitors to the grounds. A commitment to serving the community through a variety of educational offerings led to the launch of new programs to address horticulture-based job training, food access and family nutrition and therapeutic horticulture. The Conservatory again welcomed thousands of school-aged children through its popular field trip programs for *Blooms & Butterflies*, celebrating its 20th anniversary.

**2015** - Wood sculptor David Rogers brought his *Big Bugs* to the Conservatory for the summer months. Family attendance was strong throughout the "summer of bugs." The first project of Master Plan 2.0 was completed and opened The Wells Barn, a new facility for expanding outreach and education programs. Built around a 200-year-old timber frame moved to the Conservatory from Richland County, the building was soon buzzing with activity both day and night, hosting private events as well as Girl Scout camp overs, culinary classes, summer camps, and the annual We Dig Ohio urban agriculture conference. Colorful gardens featuring native plants surround this unique structure in a portion of the Conservatory's property within Franklin Park that had been unused. The Conservatory mounted its first large scale display of mums in September/October.

**2016** - Spring bursts forth with the color of 70,000 bulbs. The Conservatory welcomed sculptor Kevin Box and other origami artists for a full-facility exhibition titled, *Origami in the Garden*, for its first large-scale outing in a botanical garden. Construction was completed on a refreshment of the Grand Atrium, with new furnishings, lighting and raised ceilings. It was soon followed by the completion of a new entrance centered on the east façade of the Conservatory, with a new Visitor Center to welcome guests.

**2017** - Topiaries at the Conservatory, showcased the talents of the Conservatory's horticulture staff with life-size animals portrayed in floral forms. The exhibition was well attended and brought back for a second year in 2018.

**2018** - In May the Conservatory opened the Scotts Miracle-Gro Foundation Children's Garden, the largest horticulture project ever completed at the Conservatory. The garden features interactive experiences celebrating the Ohio landscape with a focus on introducing and connecting children to the natural world.

**2019** - Purchase of 1720 E. Broad St. for administrative offices and additional future opportunities.

**2020** - Franklin Park Conservatory closed from March 13 - June 13 due to the COVID-19 Pandemic. Also in 2020, the Conservatory joined the City of Columbus on its resolution to declare racism a public health crisis.

**2021** - An exhibition, titled *Resilience in Nature: We Are The Roses that Grew from the Concrete*, opened following the Conservatory's commitment to anti-racism efforts and fostering equity. *Resilience in Nature* featured black artists and was created in close partnership with four local organizations that lift up Black artists: All People Arts, Creative Women of Color, Maroon Arts Group, and TRANSIT ARTS.

**2022** - Seven Latinx artists displayed their work in *Diálogos*, a new summer exhibition at the Conservatory that invited viewers to engage in conversations about art and the cultural themes it explored. Curated by Central Ohio Latina artists Egle Gatins and Elena Osterwalder, the show featured new and existing works examining identity, displacement, integration, and politics through the lens of the Latinx experience in the United States.

**2023** - Franklin Park Conservatory and Botanical Gardens will feature the works of local photographer, Steve Harrison. *Franklin the Peoples Park* focuses on the activity in Franklin Park from everyday occurrences to historical moments over the last 50 years. Harrison began photographing the park in the 1960s when it was a gathering place for young black people.

**2024** - After 24 months of community research and visioning with architecture and design experts, Franklin Park Conservatory and Botanical Gardens has announced a bold vision for becoming a premier botanical garden destination in the next 25 years. The North Star Master Plan includes more than 15 transformational capital projects.

**2025** - Franklin Park Conservatory and Botanical Gardens will celebrate its past, present and future with an exhibition in its Cardinal Health Gallery titled, *The Conservatory: From Roots to Blooms*. This exhibition will guide visitors on the journey through the Conservatory's rich history, the vibrant and lively gardens and offerings of today and a glimpse into its big, bold vision for its future heralded by the new North Star Master Plan, unveiled in 2024.

## **GENERAL CONTACT INFORMATION**

For general information about Franklin Park Conservatory or details about exhibitions, membership, weddings, corporate events, education programs and more, call (614) 715-8000 or toll free at (800) 214-7275, or visit [FPConservatory.org](https://www.fpcconservatory.org).

## **PRESS CONTACT**

For all media inquiries and requests please contact Jennifer Wilson, Director of Marketing and Communications at [jwilson@fpconservatory.org](mailto:jwilson@fpconservatory.org) or via phone at 614-715-8150.