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Donna McGinnis is the next CEO of Denver Botanic Gardens



Denver Botanic Gardens announces that after an intensive six-month executive search, its Board of Trustees unanimously appointed Donna McGinnis as the next CEO, effective February 2, 2026. McGinnis joins the Gardens from Naples Botanical Garden in Florida, where she served as CEO since 2017. She will succeed Brian Vogt, the Gardens' CEO of 18 years who passed away in March 2025. Jennifer Riley-Chetwynd, the Gardens' Director of Marketing and Social Responsibility, served as Interim CEO during the search.

"Denver Botanic Gardens has a remarkable reputation and impact, not just in Colorado, but across North America's public garden sector," says McGinnis. "I had the pleasure of working with Brian Vogt on some national industry initiatives and I have been inspired by the inclusive approach to people, plants, education and conservation that flourished under his leadership. I am honored to be trusted to lead the Gardens in its next chapter."

Denver Botanic Gardens' Board Chair Mary Lee Chin says, "Our new CEO brings dynamic character and thoughtful leadership at a time when public gardens have never been more essential. She understands the vital role our institutions play in addressing today's challenges and is deeply committed to advancing mission-driven priorities such as community outreach, climate change research and regenerative agriculture while propelling the Gardens toward an even more inclusive, impactful, and sustainable future."

McGinnis adds, "I have a passion for making gardens a place for all, removing barriers that may prevent some from visiting. I believe that a meaningful approach to community and positive change requires genuine, vulnerable relationship building and I am dedicated to doing so."

Under her leadership, Naples Botanical Garden more than doubled its budget, visitation, membership and staff. She also successfully led strategic planning and fundraising at Missouri Botanical Garden and Missouri History Museum. She led a \$100+ million capital campaign at Missouri Botanical Garden and a recent \$20 million campaign for a new horticulture facility at Naples. In 2024, she co-authored the book, "Fundraising Management in a Changing Museum World," with Kate Brueggemann of Chicago's Brookfield Zoo.

McGinnis serves as the President of the Board of Directors of the American Public Gardens Association and is an active member of the International Advisory Council of Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BGCI). She helped elevate Naples Botanical Garden as the Secretariat of the Caribbean and Central American Botanic Garden Network, a collaboration of more than 200 gardens.

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About Denver Botanic Gardens: Green inside and out, Denver Botanic Gardens was founded in 1951 and is considered one of the top botanical gardens in the United States and a pioneer in water conservation. Accredited by the American Alliance of Museums, the Gardens' living collections encompass specimens from the tropics to the tundra, showcasing a plant palette chosen to thrive in Colorado's semi-arid climate. The Gardens is a dynamic, 24-acre urban oasis in the heart of the city, offering unforgettable opportunities to flourish with unique garden experiences for the whole family – as well as world-class education and plant conservation research programs. Additional sites extend this experience throughout the Front Range: Denver Botanic Gardens Chatfield Farms is a 700-acre native plant refuge with an active farm in Jefferson County; Mount Blue Sky is a high-altitude trail and interpretive site on the Mount Blue Sky Scenic Byway. The Gardens also manages programming at Plains Conservation Center in Aurora. For more information, visit us online at www.botanicgardens.org.