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ABOUT US

The Wildflower Center is located in Southwest Austin, Texas. Need directions? [Click here](#)

WILDFLOWER CENTER MISSION

The mission of the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center is to increase the sustainable use and conservation of native wildflowers, plants and landscapes.

Lady Bird Johnson, our former first lady, and Actress Helen Hayes founded an organization in 1982 to protect and preserve North America's native plants and natural landscapes. First as the National Wildflower Research Center and later as the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, this special place exists to introduce people to the beauty and diversity of wildflowers and other native plants. Every day, the Wildflower Center brings life to Mrs. Johnson's vision in its public gardens, its woodlands and sweeping meadows as well as in internationally influential research. In 2006, the Center became an Organized Research Unit of the University of Texas at Austin.

Decades ago, Mrs. Johnson recognized that our country was losing its natural landscapes and its natural beauty. As much as 30 percent of the world's native flora is at risk of extinction. The Wildflower Center was intended to help preserve and restore that beauty and the biological richness of North America. Since then, the Center has become one of the country's most credible research institutions and effective advocates for native plants.

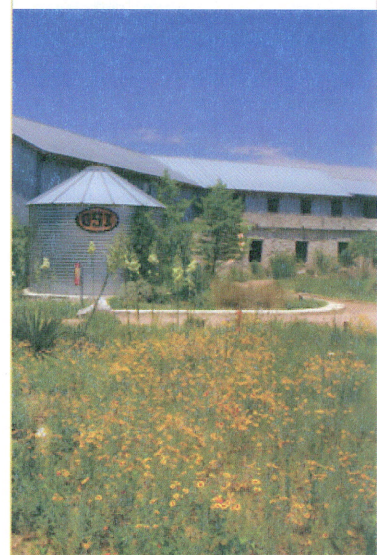
The Center's gardens display the native plants of the Central Texas Hill Country while the Plant Conservation Program protects the ecological heritage of Texas by conserving its rare and endangered flora. The [Native Plant Information Network](#) is a database of more than 7,200 native species available online.

The Land Restoration Program uses the science of healing and renewing damaged and even destroyed ecological systems to restore balance to the landscape. The Center's education programs for children and adults teach people about their natural surroundings and how to grow native plants in their own backyards.

[Wildflower Center Chronology](#)
[Susan Rieff, Executive Director](#)

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WILDFLOWER CENTER CHRONOLOGY

Founded in 1982 by Lady Bird Johnson and the late Helen Hayes, the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center is dedicated to protecting and preserving North America's native plants and natural landscapes. Our mission - to increase the sustainable use and conservation of native wildflowers, plants and landscapes - guides all that we do.

Timeline

1982

Founders Lady Bird Johnson and actress Helen Hayes establish the National Wildflower Research Center on Mrs. Johnson's 70th birthday. The Center's first home is in a small house on a plot of undeveloped land east of Austin, Texas.

1983

The Junior League of Austin selects the Wildflower Center as a sponsored project, generously giving \$30,000 over a three-year period to develop a volunteer program.

1984

The Center begins its first research project: "Germination for Seedling Identification."

Mrs. Johnson is awarded a Congressional Gold Medal for her dedication to the beautification of America.

1986

The Center's Library and Clearinghouse acquires more than 20 journals, 300 new books, and 1,500 slides.

The Center receives more than 15,000 letters requesting wildflower seed sources and information after an eight-page article appears in the March issue of *Reader's Digest*.

1988

The first edition of *Wildflower*, the journal of the Wildflower Center, is published.

"Wildflowers Across America," by Lady Bird Johnson and Carlton Lees, is published. The book's 309 pages feature inspiring text and 400 colorful illustrations.

The Jubilee Celebration, held in honor of Lady Bird Johnson's 75th birthday, in Washington, D.C., raises more than \$1 million for the Center from friends and supporters across the nation.

1989

The Wildflower Handbook, a guide to landscaping with native plants in the United States, is co-published by the Wildflower Center and Texas Monthly Press.

1995

The Center celebrates the grand opening of its new 43-acre site at La Crosse Ave. The design is a model of "total resource conservation" and emphasizes the importance of native landscapes. It receives a number of environmental and architectural awards and is featured on the cover of *Architecture* magazine.

1997

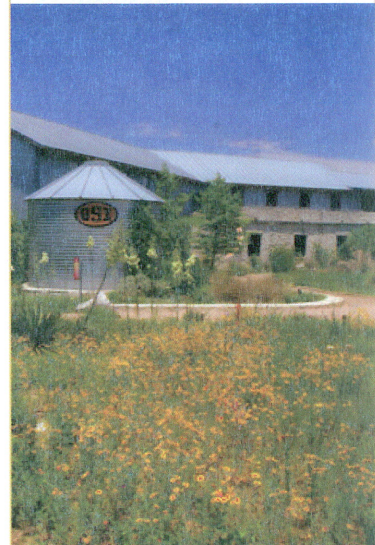
The National Wildflower Research Center is officially renamed the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center.

The Brown Foundation of Houston donates \$5 million to the Center for on-site educational programming. The Brown Center for Environmental Education is established to provide information and on-site interpretation for visitors.

1999

The Wildflower Center acquires an additional 136 acres adjacent to the site, making possible the

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development of its Landscape Restoration Program. The program researches how to best manage the landscape through different land treatments.

2001

The Wildflower Center launches its Plant Conservation Program and becomes a participating institution in the Center for Plant Conservation, a national coalition dedicated to conserving and restoring the rare native plants of the United States.

2002

The Ann and O.J. Weber Butterfly Garden, a native-plant garden designed to attract butterflies, opens. The Margaret and Eugene McDermott Learning Center, a restored carriage house moved from Central Austin, also opens.

An agreement between the City of Austin, Stratus Properties (a local developer), and the Wildflower Center culminates in the donation of 100 acres of adjacent land, bringing the Wildflower Center's acreage to 279 acres.

The Royal Botanic Gardens invites the Wildflower Center to become part of the Millennium Seed Bank Project, making it one of only five non-profits in the United States partnering in this global conservation effort aimed at safeguarding 24,000 plant species from around the world by 2010.

2003

The Native Plant Information Network (www.wildflower.org), a free online resource, is launched, offering information on more than 7,000 species of North American plants and more than 19,000 plant images.

2005

NASA awards the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center a grant to create a native plant landscape master plan at the Johnson Space Center.

The Wildflower Center and the American Society of Landscape Architects start the Sustainable Sites Initiative to create incentives and standards for sustainable landscapes.

2006

Landscape Restoration Division works with clients such as AMD, San Antonio Mission Trail and Blue Hole in Wimberley to design and implement innovative, practical restoration programs backed by solid science and field research.

The Wildflower Center becomes an official component of The University of Texas at Austin, as an Organized Research Unit of the College of Natural Sciences and the School of Architecture.

Houston Endowment awards the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center a grant to collect and conserve seeds of native plants in the Houston and East Texas area, extending the Center's efforts in a globally important plant conservation effort, the Millennium Seed Bank Project.

The U.S. Botanic Garden joins the Sustainable Sites Initiative as a partner.

2007

The Meadows Foundation awards a \$262,000 grant to the Wildflower Center to support the Sustainable Sites Initiative.

The Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center celebrates its 25th Silver Anniversary with its "25 Wild and Wonderful Years" themed Gala and Silent Art Auction.



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A LETTER FROM LADY BIRD

THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF LADY BIRD JOHNSON

- [Lady Bird Johnson Biography](#)
- [Our Environmental First Lady](#)
- [In Her Own Words](#)
- [Lady Bird Johnson Photo Gallery](#)
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- [A Letter from Lady Bird](#)
- [Making a memorial contribution to Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center Endowment Fund](#)

Welcome to our web site. My dear friend Helen Hayes and I founded the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in 1982 to educate people about the environmental necessity, economic value and natural beauty of native plants. Our Center works for more than the lovely blossoms in our open spaces. We are concerned for all of North America's native plants, from the smallest sprout to the tallest tree.

To learn that more than four thousand native plant species are in danger of extinction in this country gives us a wake-up call and brings close to home the Wildflower Center's mission. Will these plants be lost to all but memory, with succeeding generations losing even that fragile connection? Are there sources of food, fiber or medicine that might perish with them? How do we save these species in the face of an ever-expanding human population and its impact on the land?

As daunting as the prospects may seem as we search for ways to protect and make room for nature, we must remember that there are success stories in all of this. Although we may not be able to save every single species, we can each do our part to protect them. Some of the answers lie as close as our own backyards, and as far as the highways that transverse this nation to its outermost reaches.

The landscapes of homes can be complemented by, if not completely replanted in, native species. Is there a park in your neighborhood? Every kind of park -- from a vest-pocket-sized park to a city, state or industrial park -- is a natural candidate for indigenous species. Median strips and roadsides filled with a bounty of regional native plants--perhaps the biggest "gardens" in the world -- increasingly capture the interest and applause of the driving public.

My hope for what lies ahead in the field of landscape design - our own and that of the professionals - is not a revolution against the use of non-natives, but a resolution to educate ourselves about what has worked for Mother Nature through the ebb and flow of time and to put that knowledge to work in the planned landscapes that are everywhere a part of our lives.

I'm optimistic that the world of native plants will not only survive, but will thrive for environmental and economic reasons, and for reasons of the heart. Beauty in nature nourishes us and brings joy to the human spirit, it also is one of the deep needs of people everywhere.

Warm regards,

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