Dear Conservation Colleagues:

Two pressing requests – URGENT!

1. We really need your help. Please read Shirley’s email below and do write to your state legislators as described. Please do this soon, just as she suggests.

2. For conservation institutions – Please send one letter to Dr. Art Dunning, address immediately below, on your institution’s letterhead. And please send a copy of your letter to me at this gmail address (not my UGA address) – ceska.jennifer@gmail.com for compiling our case. Even if you can cut and paste your letter’s text in to an email to me – scanning is nice, but time is pressing.

Dr. Art Dunning

Vice President for Service and Outreach

1234 S. Lumpkin Street

Athens, GA 30601

Please, do both - send your individual emails to the state legislators and your institution letters to Dr. Dunning as soon as you can. The sooner the better for the SBG.

always – Jennifer

770-540-7129

ceska.jennifer@gmail.com

Conservation Coordinator, The State Botanical Garden of Georgia

Project Coordinator, Georgia Plant Conservation Alliance

 Dear Friend and Supporter of the Garden,

Many of you have already heard about the proposed budget cuts to the University of Georgia. This includes **eliminating the State Botanical Garden of Georgia** as well as the entire Georgia 4-H program plus cutting half of the county extension offices across the state. Here is the link to the current proposed cuts: <http://www.usg.edu/fiscal_affairs/documents/summary_of_reductions.pdf>

 I urge you to contact your state representatives asking them to reconsider these cuts.  When you contact your representatives make sure to identify the State Botanical Garden as the entity you are supporting: the email subject line should read: **SAVE THE STATE BOTANICAL GARDEN OF GEORGIA**. Attached is a document answering frequently asked questions about the Garden. Key points are:

1)      Learning, research and public service happen every day at the State Botanical Garden of Georgia – 7 days a week.

2)      Over 21,500 children throughout Georgia participate in Botanical Garden classes and events.

3)      Over 250,000 people visit the Garden annually.

4)      The Garden is a living museum with extensive plant collections including Georgia’s rare, threatened, and endangered species.

5)      Plant conservation efforts reach statewide, and through the Southeast US.

If the Garden closes it would have a devastating impact on communities and education. It is important that all our legislators know about the importance of our programs-especially those who serve on the House and Senate Higher Education Appropriations subcommittees. To contact your representative, go to the following website to find their contact information: <http://www.legis.ga.gov/>.  I have included contact information for Athens area representatives and members of the sub-committees.

**Contact is best made by phone or email this week.** Things are happening very quickly and we need a swift response. Please talk with your friends, family and associates about this very real threat and urge them to contact their Georgia representative as well.

Thank you for your support – we are counting on you.

Shirley

Shirley Hartzler Berry

Interim Director

State Botanical Garden of Georgia

2450 S. Milledge Avenue

Athens, GA 30605

706 542-1244

Email: shberry@uga.edu

 **Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Higher Education**

The Honorable Seth Harp, Chairman

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Seth Harp | Chairman | seth.harp@senate.ga.gov | 404.463.3931 |
| Bill Cowsert | Vice Chair | bill.cowsert@senate.ga.gov | 404.651.7738 |
| John Douglas | Secretary | john.douglas@senate.ga.gov | 404.656.0503 |
| Ronnie Chance | Member | ronnie.chance@senate.ga.gov | 404.463.1366 |
| John Crosby | Member | john.crosby@senate.ga.gov | 404.463.5258 |
| Tim Golden | Member | tim.golden@senate.ga.gov | 404.656.7580 |
| Lester G. Jackson | Member | lester.jackson@senate.ga.gov |  |
| Nan Orrock | Member | nan.orrock@senate.ga.gov | 404.463.8054 |
| Curt Thompson | Member | curt.thompson@senate.ga.gov | 404.463.1318 |

**House Appropriations Subcommittee on Higher Education**

The Honorable Earl Ehrhart, Chairman

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Earl Ehrhart | Chairman | earl@ehrhart.4emm.com | 404.463.2247 |
| Mike Cheokas | Secretary | mike.cheokas@house.ga.gov | 404.656.0325 |
| Rich Golick | Member | rich.golick@house.ga.gov | 404.656.5943 |
| Mark Hatfield | Member | mhatfield@wayxcable.com | 404.656.0109 |
| Bill Hembree | Member | bill.hembree@house.ga.gov | 404.656.5141 |
| Sheila Jones | Member | sheila.jones@house.ga.gov | 404.656.0323 |
| Bob Lane | Member | bob.lane@house.ga.gov | 404.656.5115 |
| Doug McKillip | Member | doug@dougmckillip.com | 404.656.0220 |
| Ann Purcell | Member |  | 404.656.0188 |
| Barbara Sims | Member | barbara.sims@house.ga.gov | 404.656.0213 |
| Bob Smith | Member | bob.smith@house.ga.gov | 404.656.0126 |
| Richard Smith | Member | richard@smithforgeorgia.com | 404.656.3904 |
| Len Walker | Member | lwalker107@gmail.com | 404.656.5146 |
| John Yates | Member | john.yates@house.ga.gov | 404.656.5126 |

Athens representatives:











**The State Botanical Garden of Georgia – Frequently Asked Questions:**

 **Where is the State Botanical Garden located?**

Off South Milledge Avenue about 3 miles from the central UGA campus in Athens.

 **When was the State Botanical Garden established?**        1968

The Garden was enacted by Senate Resolution 277 in 1984 to be designated ‘The State Botanical Garden of Georgia’, where the General Assembly of Georgia stated “it is only fitting and proper that we recognize the achievement and beauty represented by the garden; and it is only appropriate, therefore, that the significance of this institution to the State of Georgia and to all Georgians be recognized.”

**Does the State Botanical Garden “own” its facilities and property?**

No, all University property is owned by the State of Georgia under the auspices of the Board of Regents.

**How is the State Botanical Garden administered?**

The State Botanical Garden is a unit of the University of Georgia.  The Director reports to the Vice President for Public Service & Outreach who in turn reports to the University Provost.

**What is the current level of annual University funding for the State Botanical Garden?** $875,688

**Does the State Botanical Garden receive direct appropriations from the state legislature?**   No.

**How much of the State Botanical Garden’s annual budget is provided by the University/State?**

About 60% - 70%.

**Where does the balance of the operating budget come from?** From gifts, grants, donations, and earned income from building rentals, gift shop sales and café commissions.

**Has the State Botanical Garden been successful in attracting private support?**

Yes, all major gardens and buildings have been built principally with private funding.

**Does the University of Georgia serve as a home for other state museums?**

Yes, the Georgia Museum of Art and the Georgia Museum of Natural History.

**Was closure of these museums included in the UGA budget reduction plan?**     No.

**How many people does the State Botanical Garden serve annually?**    Approximately 250,000.

**How does the Garden compare to other University affiliated botanical gardens?**

While there is no official ranking system, the State Botanical Garden is generally considered to be in the top 10 in the U.S. with facilities virtually unequaled at other University botanical gardens.

**How does the State Botanical Garden contribute to the University of Georgia and the State of Georgia?**

**The Garden serves as an important tourist destination, bringing revenue to the Athens area.**

-          Voted by Athens Banner-Herald readership as Athens’ Best Attraction for the past five years.

-          Annual visitorship of over 250,000, second only to Stanford Stadium in Athens Clarke-County.

-          26,000 attend adult and children educational programs, family festivals and special events

from 133 of Georgia’s 159 counties.

-          Over $30 million investment in private gifts.

-          Over 1,500 Friends of the Garden members

-          Four major buildings, including two with architectural award-winning designs.

-          Headquarters of the Garden Club of Georgia, Inc. with over 15,000 members statewide.

-          Over 250 weddings and meetings held annually in Garden facilities.

-          Over ½ mile of Middle Oconee River frontage, 25 acres of protected wetlands, 5 miles of nature trails, and upland deciduous forest adds to Athens’ green space.

-          Art gallery in Visitor Center displays regional art in rotating art exhibits.

-          Garden gift shop offers crafts and artwork from local artists and books by local authors.

-          Free lectures and concerts provide outreach to Athens community and a venue for local artists and horticulture experts.

-          Volunteer programs provide gardening skills, social opportunities and support for the Garden.

**The State Botanical Garden of Georgia is a living museum housing International botanical collections.**

-          First rate native flora collections in the state, many of which are rare, threatened and endangered, including a safeguarded collection of eastern hemlock and two safeguarded populations of the world’s most critically endangered conifer—Florida torreya.

-          Plant collections of socio-economic and historic importance to Georgia, used to educate all students, including UGA undergraduates.

-          Research collections monitored by UGA professors, graduate and undergraduate students.

-          Garden displays tied to professional organizations, including All-America Selections, Southeastern Conifer Society Reference Garden, American Daffodil Society Display Garden with an emphasis on heritage and heirloom cultivars.

-          Both mountain and coastal plain bogs display *Sarracenia* species (pitcherplants) that are the most critically endangered of our state wildflowers.

-          Most recent garden exhibits collections of flowering plants to inspire and educate homeowners and students.

**The Garden serves as a center for internationally recognized environmental education.**

-          University of Georgia students utilize the Garden for numerous field laboratory classes: entomology, plant taxonomy, horticulture, science education, art, broadcast news, service-learning projects, ecology, forestry, etc. UGA interns in horticulture, education, publicity, event planning and more are trained with the Garden staff as mentors.

-          Teachers from throughout the state participate in the Endangered Plant Stewardship Network, where Georgia teachers earn required CEUs and qualify to receive a permit through the Georgia Department of Natural Resources to keep threatened and endangered species on their school site providing environmental education to elementary school students.

-          Provide statewide professional development and on-going support to educators with grant funded environmental education / service learning program, Garden Earth Naturalists.

-          Conduct on-going programming for students and families including standards-based school field trips, summer environmental education camps and family festivals.

-          Award-winning education program chosen to develop after school programs nationwide.

-          Coordinate and provide facilities for Athens Area Master Gardeners training and monthly meetings.

-          Partnering with the Maquipacuna Foundation to create Our Shared Forests, a sustaining organization that supports Ecuadorian farmers while teaching children on two continents about the similarities and interdependence of each habitat.

**The Garden is a major influence in conservation nationally and throughout the state of Georgia.**

-          Headquarters and creators of the internationally recognized Georgia Plant Conservation Alliance, the most active plant conservation network in the state, now used as a model for similar programs in North Carolina, Texas and Alabama.

-          Since its inception 17 years ago, the Plant Conservation and Research Program has received more than $1.4 million in grants and gifts to support its mission.

-          Sponsor for graduate student MS and PhD degrees completed by UGA students in the departments of Horticulture and the Odum School of Ecology.

-          Native plants are propagated and grown for federal and state restoration and endangered plant safeguarding projects, in cooperation with the Georgia DNR, US Fish and Wildlife, and the US Forest Service.

-          An invited member of the Center for Plant Conservation, a national network of 36 of America’s leading botanical institutions dedicated to preventing the extinction of imperiled native flora.

-          Headquarters of Botanical Guardians, a statewide volunteer (over 100 participants) network monitoring at-risk plant populations.

-          Funded by multiple grants from the Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust to work with gardens in Argentina and Costa Rica to develop horticultural programs featuring native plants.

-          The Botanical Garden (with Whitehall Forest) is an Important Bird Area (IBA) designated by the Audubon Society in 2008.

-          Certificate in Native Plant Program has 29 graduates and 120 participants who develop and volunteer for conservation projects in their communities.

-          Member of Botanic Garden Conservation International, American Public Garden Association, Georgia Green Industry Association, Georgia Environmental Education Alliance, American Conifer Society, American Daffodil Society, American Camellia Society, American Nursery Association.

**Private fundraising has resulted in $30 million in the creation and growth of the Garden in 41 years.**

-          State revenues through UGA fund positions; revenues from private donations, rentals, educational programs, grants and facility rentals compose 30-40% of the Gardens operating budget and practically all construction of gardens and facilities.

-          $3 million Horticulture Complex under construction scheduled for Summer 2010 completion.