

## Brooklyn Botanic Garden Opens New Award-Winning Visitor Center



**The new 20,000-square-foot Brooklyn Botanic Garden Visitor Center sports a 10,000-square-foot green roof atop the building's glass façade. The building's north side is tucked into an existing berm.**

*Photos: Albert Vecerka / Esto.*

New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg was among the prominent officials on hand May 16, 2012 to officially open the new visitor center at the Brooklyn Botanic Garden (BBG). The center's design, by Marion Weiss and Michael Manfredi of the New York-based firm Weiss/Manfredi, garnered a 2008 award for "Excellence in Design" from the New York City Public Design Commission.

The sinuous glass structure, a synthesis of architecture and landscape design, abuts an existing berm on the property's northeast corner. It's a compelling entry into the 52-acre garden. The building offers a 10,000-square-foot leaf-shaped green roof of over 40,000 plants—grasses, spring bulbs and perennial

wildflowers.

"Thanks to an extraordinary public-private partnership and an innovative design, this new Visitor Center will provide a welcoming place for people from across the street and around the globe to learn about sustainability and the garden's remarkable collections," said Mayor Bloomberg.

In response to increased attendance at the garden, and the evident growing interest in urban horticulture and sustainability in the Brooklyn area, BBG is creating a suite of new and enhanced gardens: an Herb Garden, a Woodland Garden, an expanded Native Flora Garden, a Water Garden, a water conservation project and a Children's Discovery Garden designed by Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates. There will also be an expanded and redesigned public entrance at Flatbush Avenue by Architecture Research Office.



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*Collage: Brooklyn Botanic Garden*

The building's curved glass trellis is the entrance and offers views into the garden. The clerestory glazing of the glass and the fritted glass on the south walls minimize heat gain and maximize natural daylight inside.

The building's green roof will change throughout the year. The roof on the Washington Avenue side of the building is pleated copper roof that echoes the garden's landmark 1917 McKim, Mead & White Administration Building and will ultimately weather to green.

A series of rain gardens collect and filter runoff to improve stormwater management. Nearly 60,000 plants were installed around the Visitor Center, including cherry, magnolia and tupelo trees, viburnums, native roses and three

rain gardens full of water-loving plants. The green roof plantings will change throughout the year.

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## Comments

**Name:** Hank White      Wrote in with **correction comment**

**Comment:** HM White is the landscape architectural firm responsible for the three-acre design and planting design for the living roof for BBG's new Visitor Center. HM White was retained by BBG in 2006 to develop a landscape master plan to seamlessly integrate with the new Visitor Center. Concepts established and embraced within the Master Plan led to HM White's final design, construction documentation and implementation for the project. More than 100,000 plants were installed and over 40% of them new to BBG's plant collection. HM White also developed a landscape design based storm water management solution, which has emerged as a fundamental pedagogical component to the project and BBG's sustainable design mission.

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