



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**MEDIA CONTACT:**

Anna Beck, Director of Communications and Special Projects

Huntsville Botanical Garden

[abeck@hsvbg.org](mailto:abeck@hsvbg.org)

256-830-4447, ext. 226

**Huntsville Botanical Garden offers new flexible STEM education options for grades K-8**

HUNTSVILLE, Ala. (Sept. 16, 2020) – As parents and caregivers continue to navigate the beginning of a unique school year, the [Huntsville Botanical Garden](https://www.hsvbg.org) offers flexible education options to supplement, strengthen, and simplify STEM learning for students in kindergarten through eighth grade in the Huntsville area and beyond. Options include Nature Academy, a series of in-person classes; virtual field trips; and the Learning Pod, a rental space for group learning.

“It is important to us that our programs and resources meet the needs of our community, which is why we are excited to offer these flexible learning opportunities,” said Sue Wagner, chief executive officer of the Garden. “A central part of the Garden’s mission is to educate our community about the essential role that plants play in our lives, and we are committed to continuing the work of this mission in new, creative ways. Whether students are here at the Garden, at school, or at home, these are the kinds of educational experiences that can inspire them to become gardeners, horticulturalists, and lifelong nature lovers.”

Nature Academy provides hands-on science classes at the Garden to enrich STEM learning for students in kindergarten through eighth grade. Every month from August through April, a new two-hour class is offered covering a different nature science topic such as leaf chemistry and insects. All classes are taught by certified educators, and registration is open to all homeschool, public school, and private school students.

As an alternative to bringing students to the Garden, virtual field trips allow educators to bring a Garden experience to their students. Virtual field trips include an exclusive video of a guided tour of the Garden as well as accompanying curriculum materials and student activities. All materials support Next Generation Science Standards and STEM learning for kindergarten through eighth grade. Currently, the Butterflies and Pollinators virtual field trip is available, featuring a look into the Garden’s butterfly lab and the Purdy Butterfly House.

- more -

“We are thrilled to be able to offer programs that teach science in an engaging and fun way while maintaining our commitment to the health and safety of every student,” said Misty Hertzig, manager of youth programming at the Garden. “It is essential that we continue to engage and inspire young learners both in person and remotely.”

The Learning Pod is a rentable space for group learning that provides a place for educators to teach or for caregivers to facilitate their students’ participation in online education. Admission to the Garden is included with rental, giving students access to hands-on activities and outdoor breaks.

“We realized that our indoor venues could be a solution for someone who simply needs more space for their students to spread out safely,” said Dale Slayton, director of special occasions, events, and hospitality services at the Garden. “These are challenging times for all of us, and we want to serve the community however we can.”

Additional information about the Garden’s flexible education options, including registration for classes, can be found at [hsvbg.org/learn](https://hsvbg.org/learn).

In accordance with guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Alabama Department of Public Health, the Garden has implemented safety measures for all guests, volunteers, and employees. Guidelines for visitors and in-person program participants include requirements for face coverings and social distancing protocols. A full list of visitor guidelines can be found at [hsvbg.org/visit](https://hsvbg.org/visit).

###

### **About the Huntsville Botanical Garden**

The 112-acre Huntsville Botanical Garden is open year-round and contains a diverse ecosystem of meadows, upland and bottomland forest, and wetlands, as well as a variety of specialty gardens and native plant collections. The Mathews Nature Trail contains the largest accredited trillium collection in the U.S., and the Anderson Education Center is home to the nation’s largest open-air butterfly house. The Native Plants Teaching Garden is a public space that highlights the way local plants, soil, pollinators, and birds create distinct communities and how they interact to form a diverse, sustainable, and attractive landscape. A 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, the Garden is a member of the American Public Gardens Association, the North American Plant Collections Consortium, and the American Horticultural Society, as well as an ArbNet-accredited arboretum. For more information, visit [www.hsvbg.org](https://www.hsvbg.org).