



To: Leah Romero, ZBGC Chair; Holly Hawk, ZBGC Executive Director  
From: Karen Kalergis, AAGC President  
Re: Amended, FY 2024 AAGC Education Report  
Date: December 8, 2024

This amendment to the report provided November 30, 2024, reflects the efforts of all 21 AAGC clubs who hold events at Zilker Botanical Garden. The East Austin Garden Club and Capitol City Judges Council do not meet at the Garden, and so are not subject to reporting requirements.

Most of the Educational Programs take place in the Austin Area Garden Center, a building that was first envisioned in 1954 as a gathering place for garden clubs to provide educational programs to the community. Three of our clubs were among the six garden clubs that worked with PARD on the dream to build a Garden Center on city property. Violet Crown Garden Club, The Garden Club of Austin, and West Lake Hills Garden Club are still actively involved as volunteers, educators and donors, working to support Zilker Botanical Garden.

In 1955, AAGC was incorporated as a nonprofit to serve as stewards of the proposed Garden Center. The Austin Area Garden Center building was dedicated on October 25, 1964, and this October, AAGC celebrated the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the building. At the ceremony attended by stakeholders from PARD, ZBGC, and the Austin area community, AAGC rededicated itself to our promise to provide educational programs to the public at Zilker Botanical Garden.

***In FY 2024, AAGC presented 150 educational programs reaching 4,308 people.***

This compares with the 111 educational programs which reached 2,911 people in FY 2023.

AAGC clubs accomplished this by embracing the vision that has guided us since 1955, first with PARD and now ZBGC: collaborating with our partners to meet the needs of the public for diverse, vibrant and meaningful educational programs.

### **FY 2024 Educational Programs by the Numbers**

Table One summarizes the 150 Educational Programs offered and the number of people reached.

<b>Type of Educational Program</b>	<b>Number of Programs</b>	<b>People Reached*</b>
Monthly Meetings - club selects the speaker and meeting is open to the public	127	3,847
Club sponsored session held outside monthly meeting such as seminars, workshops, and TWiG, Talks and Walks in the Garden	17	291
Workshop at Club Show or Sale	6	170

**\*Include people reached by three clubs that Zoom meetings live from the Auditorium**

To be counted in this report of AAGC Educational Programs, the education needs to be held somewhere in the Garden, and scheduled for a specific date, time, speaker and topic.

As part of their show or sale, these four clubs scheduled six workshops and reached 170 people: **Austin Bonsai Society**, **Austin Daylily Society**, **First Austin African Violet Society** and **Texas Bamboo Society**.

AAGC club members are known for their expertise in certain areas. They serve as judges at shows and sales and have won awards for their daylilies, African Violets and floral arrangements, to name just a few. People come to these shows and sales not only to buy things for their gardens, but also to talk to these experts. Thus, club shows and sales are a time for “informal education,” as well as drawing paying visitors to the garden and generating the 15% net profit to support the garden. A few attendance records from shows held this year are illustrative:

**Austin Bonsai Society 1100 Heart of Texas Orchid Society 310**

**Iris Society of Austin 161 Violet Crown Garden Club 350**

“Informal education” also occurs while clubs are volunteering in the Garden in the ponds or herb garden. The **Austin Bonsai Society** notes that while it is tending the rotating Texas State Bonsai Exhibit which gives the public access to 150 exhibit trees over the entire year, members often speak with visitors. **Austin Daylily Society** provided subject matter expertise to volunteers who assisted in planting daylilies in the new location at Zilker. Members of the **Iris Society of Austin** also educated volunteers while planting the new Iris bed.

### **AAGC Collaborations with Partners Enhance Educational Program Offerings**

AAGC clubs enhance the quality, richness and diversity of their educational programs by selecting speakers and topics from these resources:

- 1) Their own club members, who as noted above, are experts on particular plants and species, flower arrangement and propagation.
- 2) Their relationships with the state, national and international garden community. Clubs tap these connections, so AAGC educational programs can feature an orchid grower from Peru, an entomologist and butterfly expert from northwest Louisiana, an author from South Texas, a koi expert from California, a plant medicine facilitator from across town, and a Head Gardener from the Chihauhan Desert Resort Institute with an update on Big Bend.
- 3) Their partners at ZBG. AAGC clubs enlist PARD’s Matt Morris and Judith Craft, and ZBGC’s Jeff Pavlat and Matthew Gaston to present educational programs. (And Judith and Jeff are longtime club members.)

Collaboration with partners not only enhances the content of our educational programs, but also makes the educational information more accessible to visitors. Here are a few examples:

- Austin Herb Society collaborated with ZBGC’s education intern to create content for QR codes to educate visitors about plants in the Zilker Herb Garden which AHS has maintained in its current location since 2017 and provided a lot of “informal education.”
- AAGC and ZBGC co-hosted National Garden Week June 1-7. ZBGC’s Monica Sivilli created a logo and web page to promoted the week’s schedule with garden clubs offering NGW themed programs. ZBGC and AAGC closed out NGW with Matthew Gaston’s session on Sustainable Gardens, and Karen Kalergis’ session on Resilient Gardeners.

- Roots and Wings is an annual event where clubs contribute to educational activities. **Austin Butterfly, Austin Ikebana Group, Violet Crown Garden Club** and **Zilker Garden Club** were among those working with ZBGC and PARD on this event.
- This year, we made progress on being able to count the visitors who come to the Garden specifically for an AAGC sponsored educational program, show or sale. In June, the **Heart of Texas Orchid Society** presented a weekend workshop on “Growing Orchids with Confidence.” HOTOS’ Alison Galloway worked with ZBGC’s Education Director Matthew Gaston to pilot the idea of integrating club events into the Altru ticketing process. The pilot was a success due to ZBGC’s Executive Director Holly Hawk who facilitated coordination, so the HOTOS event was promoted on the web page, directed people to the ZBGC Altru ticketing system to pay registration and admission fees in one payment, and provided the club with a list of registrants. We hope to use Altru more in FY 2025 to better report the number of visitors AAGC educational programs, shows and sales bring to the Garden.

### Other ways club education reaches the public

Clubs also extend their education beyond the Garden with Speakers Bureaus. **Austin Herb Society, First Austin African Violet Society** and **Austin Pond Society** all have a Speakers Bureau that invites participants to come to Zilker Botanical Garden for more education on gardening. **Austin Organic Gardeners** reports 200 YouTube views of recordings of their meetings. **Austin Butterfly Forum** reached 166 people in Zoom-only meetings. **Barton Hills Garden Club** and **Yaupon Garden Club** publicize meetings in community newspapers, reaching neighbors who may not have seen it on the Zilker website.

### Evaluation and Assessments

Garden clubs have a variety of ways to receive regular input and comments from their constituents, according to the reports we received.

The **Austin Area Begonia Society** sees the listings of their monthly educational programs on the ZBG website as the reason for the increase in attendance and membership, and an indication of their meeting a need for these educational programs.

The **Austin Bonsai Society** did a two-page survey of membership towards the end of 2023 to discover the interests and suggestions of ABS club members for future educational programs and events. Feedback shows the FY 2024 workshops and public shows have been well received.

The **Austin Ikebana Group** publishes its meetings on the ZBG website; the RSVP’s are tracked and recorded in meeting minutes and show interest in their educational programs by non-members as well as members.

**Austin Pond Society** noted that “attendees thanked us for our time and valuable information.”

**Barton Hills Garden Club** wrote that “attendees have been happy with our speakers program” which was designed in response to requests that they emphasize the importance of native plants.

The session **First Austin African Violet Society** offered at its show was in response to Zilker being one of the sites where they “stimulate interest in African violets by providing educational activities and judged African violet shows in communities statewide.”

In addition, clubs use a committee to develop a list of speakers of interest to the club and then design the meeting schedule.

We look forward to being part of the survey process in Partnership A to see what the interests are in the community for educational programming and develop our offerings accordingly.

### **Looking to FY 2025**

Since AAGC signed the agreement with ZBGC in February 2020, FY 2024 is only the second year in which the Garden has been open and available for us to do educational programs.

Each year we have increased the number of educational programs, and the number of persons reached. We look forward to continuing that trend in the year ahead.