



## GREEN THUMBS ALERT: Cleveland Botanical Garden Plans ECO-FRIENDLY EVENT

BY ALYSSE DALESSANDRO | PHOTO BY LINDA FORD



*Geri Unger, director of education, Cleveland Botanical Garden*

Going green can start “in your own backyard.” Attending eco-educational events is another way to begin your green lifestyle. Why not combine both efforts by attending the Cleveland Botanical Garden’s Sustainability Symposium: “In your own backyard” on Feb. 7. Director of education for CBG, Geri Unger, offers the details on the event and also gives some of her own tips when it comes to planning green events:

A Costa Rican rainforest and a desert in Madagascar can be found in Cleveland. This is no weather-related miracle; rather, it’s the work of the Cleveland Botanical Garden. From its beginning in 1930, the CBG was founded on a mission of educating the public about gardening and urban beautification, according to Unger. “Education is the most important mission of the Cleveland Botanical Garden,” Unger says. “We offer life-long learning opportunities, starting with toddlers and parents in our Hershey Children’s Garden, school programs from pre-K through university level, our high school urban agriculture program called Green Corps, and adult programs in master gardening and horticulture.”

One of the educational efforts is the Sustainability Symposium in which guests

learn “practical gardening and landscape greening ideas and innovations applicable to participants’ homes, businesses, and neighborhoods,” according to Unger. Guests will learn from both national and local gardening experts. Unger hopes that “participants will gain knowledge on regional gardening as well as a better understanding of their personal contribution to beautiful and beneficial landscapes, environmental stewardship, and community vitality.”

This event may be teaching individuals new techniques, but the impact is far reaching. “It takes many individual gardens to change an entire ecosystem,” Unger says. “Participants will become part of a growing network of active

environmental stewards.” **Becoming active in the local environment is imperative** Unger says. “For the city of Cleveland to compete in the 21st Century, it will need to use its natural capital as well as its human and monetary capital.”

To host a green event, Unger recommends to “have it be carbon neutral” or to offset the “use of greenhouse gas emissions by purchasing renewable energy, or in the case of the Cleveland Botanical Garden, growing gardens, urban agriculture sites, and planting trees that absorb carbon dioxide.”

Unger’s other advice? Recycling, composting, and encouraging participants to take the bus, ride a bike or carpool.

Little changes in event planning can make all the difference. Switching from an ordinary event to a green event is nothing more than “a bit of a shift in paradigm or corporate culture, thinking about the decisions of materials going into the event and materials leaving the event” according to Unger. The shift in mindset means awareness of the resources being used.

If you cannot make it to the Sustainability Symposium: In Your Own Backyard, remember CBG in the summer, when it will host the American Horticultural Society’s Children and Youth Gardening Symposium from July 22-25. “This will be a great opportunity to showcase Cleveland, the Cleveland Botanical Garden, and our Green Corps program,” Unger says. ■

*For more information on the Sustainability Symposium or to find out more about the Cleveland Botanical Garden: [www.cb garden.org](http://www.cb garden.org).*