

NEWS



Photo by David Whitman

THE BATCHELOR FOUNDATION PROVIDES A MAJOR MATCHING GRANT

Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden is very pleased to announce that the Batchelor Foundation has generously renewed its prior three-year commitment to contribute \$500,000 annually to the Fairchild Challenge for three additional years.

As Fairchild's multidisciplinary, environmental education outreach program for high school and middle school students, the Fairchild Challenge program requires an annual budget of just over one million dollars to cover its design, implementation, evaluation and celebration. The Fairchild Challenge is offered at no cost to schools and requires a tremendous fundraising effort by Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden each year. Fairchild is indebted to the Batchelor Foundation for their extraordinary support of the Fairchild Challenge program.



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LATIN AMERICAN PLANT INITIATIVE MEETING TAKES PLACE AT FAIRCHILD

On August 11-12, 2008, Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden hosted an international meeting to help advance the Latin American Plants Initiative (LAPI). The meeting was attended by senior staff from the world's botanic gardens and botanical institutions, including representatives from the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, Missouri Botanical Garden, The New York Botanical Garden, Harvard University, Instituto de Biociências—Universidade de São Paulo, Universidad Nacional of Colombia, Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle of Paris, Universidad Nacional Autónoma of México, Conservatoire et Jardin botaniques de la Ville de Genève (Geneva), and JSTOR, among others.

The meeting was chaired by the former director of Kew Professor Peter Crane, who is now based at the University of Chicago. Participants and colleagues from around the world enjoyed a beautiful tour of Fairchild from expert volunteer guide Robert Petzinger, followed by an amazing sunset and dinner at the Jean DuPont Shehan Visitor Center Ballroom in the company of Fairchild staff and several trustees.

LAPI is a major project to digitize the type specimens of Caribbean and Latin American plants, led by a consortia of leading natural history museums and herbaria of the world. This project will greatly benefit plant conservation worldwide. At Fairchild, our work with LAPI is conducted through Fairchild's Center for Tropical Plant Conservation, including staff member Melissa Abdo. Our efforts are generously supported by The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Fairchild's role in this initiative is indeed an important one, as we are the coordinating institution for most Caribbean herbaria and botanical institutions. We have already conducted the first phase of our activities as a LAPI partner, and are proceeding with the development and implementation of the next phase.

The Fairchild Challenge 2008-2009 Launch Brunch

The Fairchild Challenge recently launched its seventh year for high schools, its sixth year for middle schools and its second year for the pilot program for elementary schools.



In late August, Fairchild hosted the Fairchild Challenge 2008-2009 Launch Brunch for teachers to review this year's menu of Challenge options. Approximately 247 teachers from 102 middle and high schools and 10 elementary schools in the pilot program participated—on a Saturday! It is heartening that teachers care so passionately about a program that is creatively fostering environmental awareness, scholarship and stewardship in tens of thousands of students, and by extension, their families, friends and communities.

Everyone enjoyed a delicious brunch while they shared some amazing statistics on the program's growth and heart-warming and inspiring quotes from participating students and teachers. One teacher was quoted as saying, "With great creativity, the Fairchild Challenge tackles the lofty goal of helping young people develop as responsible citizens. It is a model program, and I am privileged to take part in it. I learn a lot from the students who participate in the program and, like them, I have a wonderful time in the process."

Antoinette Dunbar, Deputy Superintendent, Curriculum, Instruction and School Improvement of Miami-Dade County Public Schools, took the podium to thank the teachers and offer her support for their efforts in making the Fairchild Challenge a growing success. In addition, John Malloy of the Fairchild Palms also thanked everyone and encouraged teachers to join the young professionals group, the Fairchild Palms, which was established to celebrate and support the Fairchild Challenge. Following the brunch and workshops, teachers received program DVDs, booklets, solar kits and live oak tree saplings.

The Fairchild Challenge is a multidisciplinary, environmental education outreach program designed to increase environmental awareness, scholarship and stewardship. This annual, standards-based program attracts students of diverse backgrounds, abilities,

interests and talents. Teachers and school district officials embrace the Fairchild Challenge because it is aligned with Sunshine State Standards, is offered free of charge, promotes interdisciplinary, open-ended learning, builds a "green" school community and provides comprehensive resources and support for schools.

Fairchild encourages and supports the community's under-resourced schools with incentives such as grants for school gardens, native plants and sapling trees, professional development seminars, transportation subsidies and additional resources. The Challenge has grown dramatically from 1,400 student participants in 2002, to more than 40,000 students last year! This year promises to engage even more students, teachers and schools.

FUNDING THE FAIRCHILD CHALLENGE

The Batchelor Foundation provides a major matching grant

The Fairchild Challenge is offered at no cost to schools and, each year, requires a heroic fundraising effort by Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden. Major funding for the program comes from the Batchelor Foundation.

Designing, implementing, evaluating and celebrating the Fairchild Challenge program requires an annual budget of just over one million dollars. The Batchelor Foundation has provided a matching contribution of \$500,000 annually for the past three years and, this summer, renewed its commitment for three additional years. We are indebted to the Batchelor Foundation for their support of the Fairchild Challenge program.

Additional support for the Fairchild Challenge comes from Assurant, BankAtlantic Foundation, Bank of America, Tom and Sylvia Collins, the Fairchild Palms, Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden members and friends, The Farago Foundation, Inc., Bernard and Marilyn Horowitz, McIntosh Foundation, Miami-Dade County Department of Environmental Resources Management, Edward S. Moore Family Foundation, National Science Foundation subcontracts, Peacock Foundation, Inc., David M. Rogero, Shepard Broad Foundation, Inc., Sonesta Bayfront Hotel—Coconut Grove, South Florida Water Management District, Sue and Alan Steinberg, Target, Washington Mutual, Angela W. Whitman, Robyn Wolf and anonymous donors, among others.

In the words of our Fairchild Challenge teachers: "Please thank the donors for supporting a program that brings urban kids closer to nature." 