



# Reciprocal Network Information for Gardens

The Schedel Arboretum & Gardens (Elmore, OH)

**We are pleased that your garden is considering joining the American Horticultural Society's Reciprocal Garden Network!** You may have a few questions about what the program entails and how it works. We hope the information below answers your questions.

## What is the AHS Reciprocal Garden Network?

The AHS Reciprocal Garden Network is a network of over 360 gardens throughout the United States and North America. The network is organized and administered by the American Horticultural Society, a 101-year-old organization that promotes horticultural excellence. Since 1990, the network has granted hundreds of thousands of AHS and network garden members greater access to cultivated green spaces. Participating gardens agree to offer benefits to members of AHS and fellow gardens members, in exchange for benefits that their own garden and members receive.

## What gardens are part of the network?

The network represents public gardens of all sizes, landscape types, and horticultural approaches. Some gardens are new and growing, while others are over a century old with a million visitors each year. Here is what just a few of our participating gardens say about network:

**Bok Tower Gardens (FL):** "We love the opportunity to explore other places like ours. Our members return from their network visits with ideas to share with us and new experiences to talk about with fellow members."

**Santa Barbara Botanic Garden (CA):** "Members love the fact that we offer reciprocal admission! We get lots of calls from people that are out of town or out of state."

**The North Carolina Arboretum (NC):** "Our members love having the network as a benefit."

**Desert Botanical Garden (AZ):** "The AHS Reciprocal Garden Network is very popular with our members."

**Holden Forests & Gardens (OH):** "The AHS Reciprocal Garden Network is always rated as a top member benefit in our member surveys."

**Chicago Botanic Garden (IL):** "Our members love the network."

**Green Bay Botanical Garden (WI):** "When conducting our membership surveys, it always comes up as one of the top benefits!"

**Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute (TX):** "Our membership has nearly doubled over the past two years since being an AHS network garden!"



## Why would my garden want to join the AHS Reciprocal Garden Network?

**Increase Your Garden's Visibility and Visitors.** From features in publications like USA Today to social media posts by major influencers, the network spreads the word about gardens to wider audiences than any individual garden can reach alone. AHS national marketing means that over 75,000 web visitors would learn about your garden every month on our dedicated network webpage. Your garden would be featured on AHS social media platforms and email lists, which have a combined impact of over 100,000 people in your target audience. And hundreds of thousands of members already in the network will be notified of your participation and be eager to travel to your garden for a visit!

**Increase Your Garden's Membership.** The feedback from existing network gardens is clear: the network adds value and incentives to their individual garden's membership packages. Imagine learning that if you join your local garden, you not only can enjoy that beautiful green space, but you will gain free admission to hundreds of other gardens around the country! Your current members will be delighted, and you will attract new members, at an institutional cost of pennies per person. There is no higher value, lower cost benefit out there!

**Increase Your Garden's Reputation!** The network gives your garden the opportunity to affiliate more closely with over 360 fellow recognized and respected gardens that represent the United States and North America. Your garden would join over 360 other gardens in sharing the best of American horticulture with the 121 million annual visitors to the country's public gardens.

## Does my garden qualify for the AHS Reciprocal Garden Network?

Almost certainly! AHS's only requirement for participating in the network is that your garden must be open to the public and have been in existence for at least one year. That's it!

## What would my garden need to do if we joined?

Simple! If your garden usually charges visitors for admission and parking, these must be offered free as a benefit to network visitors. When a network visitor presents a membership card, your garden must honor the same number of people for free admission as your equivalent membership card would for your own members.

If your garden does not usually charge visitors for admission and parking, you must offer your educational programs, special events, and audio tours/guides for free or at a discounted rate as a benefit to network visitors. When a network visitor presents a membership card, your garden must honor the same number of people for these free or discounted benefits as your equivalent membership card would for your own members.

And other network gardens must offer your members the same!



Hildene, The Lincoln Family Home (Manchester, VT)  
The Lincoln Family Home





### **Is it a one-time sign-up?**

Network gardens renew their participation in the network annually. AHS will send you a reminder to renew each year.

### **Will my garden need to pay a fee? If so, how much?**

There is a modest fee for joining, based on each garden's budget. Annual budgets under \$1 million pay \$175 per year; budgets between \$1-3.5 million pay \$350 per year; and budgets over \$3.5 million pay \$575 per year. This fee covers AHS's costs for marketing the garden network, administrative fees, etc. We've heard that the fee is a small fraction of the actual value gardens receive and is significantly lower than most other types of institutional memberships.

### **What if there are a lot of gardens in my area? Does joining the network mean we need to let all the other gardens' local members in for free? How will that affect our own garden's membership?**

Don't worry, we understand this situation, and we have a fail-safe option called the Local Visitor Exception Policy. The exception says that only network visitors who reside more than 90 miles away from the garden will be granted network benefits. This policy is optional for each garden. If you choose to invoke the policy, we will make sure we communicate your policy on the network website. Then your garden's members can enjoy the benefits at other gardens, while your garden enjoys visitors from around the country!

### **I would like to learn more— how can I do so?**

You'll find more information on our [AHS Reciprocal Garden Network web page](#), including a map of network gardens throughout the United States. Or feel free to contact **Courtney Allen, AHS' Director of National Programs**, at [rap@ahsgardening.org](mailto:rap@ahsgardening.org), with any questions.

### **Our garden is ready to join the AHS Reciprocal Garden Network! How can we do that?**

Fantastic! To join the network, please [complete this application](#). We will be in touch soon!