



THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
NEW YORK, NY 10007

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**CONTACT:** [pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov](mailto:pressoffice@cityhall.nyc.gov), (212) 788-2958

**TRANSCRIPT: MAYOR DE BLASIO DELIVERS REMARKS AT THE GRAND  
OPENING OF THE NEW YORK BOTANICAL GARDEN'S EDIBLE ACADEMY**

**Mayor Bill de Blasio:** So, I just want you to know when they handed me gardening shears for the ribbon cutting I thought it was like an amazing innovation. I had never done a ribbon cutting with gardening shears before. I said this is going to be amazing; this is going to be great. But Gregory you're right, I think it was – end up being a metaphor for the challenges of New York City. It took a few tries my friends, but we got there, and the ribbon was cut, and good things are happening.

[Applause]

I wanted to start with a thank you to everyone. This is a really precious place in New York City, and the New York Botanical Garden is a jewel in the Bronx and particularly a pride for the Bronx and something that people in the Bronx are so thrilled to experience, but it's for all of us. It's for all five boroughs, and a lot of you here, I want to thank the members of the board, I want to thank all the people who work here, all you do. I can tell it's a labor of love. You can tell from the care with which this place is kept and the amazing impact it has on so many lives in this city. The people put their hearts and souls into it, and it's something that's beautiful about this city. It's so many people come forward, volunteers, and donors, and so many people who want to make this an extraordinary resource. So, I want to thank everyone but – I also something I like to do is to ask everyone to thank each other. So please clap for your neighbor in appreciation for all that you've done for each other.

[Applause]

And, I want to also say the City is so proud to be a part of this and yes it is the people's money, and we are chosen by them to determine what is the best use of that money, and this is unquestionably such a good place to place to invest in, and I want to thank the person who makes sure that that money gets to the right place and is used the right way, our Cultural Affairs Commissioner Tom Finkelpearl, thank you so much.

[Applause]

I want to thank for her extraordinary leadership when you see a lot success there is a great leader behind it who helped to make it happen with so many people. I want to thank the Chair of the Board Maureen Chilton. Thank you so much Maureen for all you have done.

[Applause]

And now to Gregory — 29 years, 29 years of making this place great, that's the definition of labor of love. And to do anything for 29 years my friends takes extraordinary focus, and love, and patience. But Gregory you've made this place greater with every passing year. The attendance has sky rocketed, all the things that you've helped to create have made it something even more extraordinary. When you came here it was pretty amazing, but 29 years later it's an even greater jewel in the crown and you have given your all. And I want to thank you on behalf of 8.6 million New Yorkers. Let's all thank Gregory.

[Applause]

Now an outdoor standing ovation, that's very good, I like that. So look, just very quickly, part of why this is so important, it's a moment in our history as humans where we really have to understand the earth more clearly and all of us as residents, as citizens are going to be part of deciding the future and protecting this earth that we need so desperately. When all of us have a chance to experience something we don't get enough of in urban life, it's crucial, it opens our eyes, it opens our minds, it makes us think and feel things that are so important for our children, that's particularly important. And they need to know from early on how much mother earth means to them. By the way let's applaud all of these children, for being here, being a part of us.

[Applause]

We also know that in this nation of abundance we have the strangest contradiction that there's more food than we could possibly use in America, but not enough of it gets to the right people, and a lot of the food that does get to people is not healthy enough. And here you're righting that wrong, you're teaching our young people what health, natural food is from the very beginning of their lives, you are teaching them how to grow it, and that makes it very personal, it makes it very real. The children who don't get an opportunity to understand what healthy food is are deprived in their life but young people from the very beginning have the chance to see it and touch it, feel it, grow it, they are empowered, and that's what's happening here today.

Our young people are extraordinary. I have a 20-year-old and a 23-year-old and they teach me something new every time I talk to them. And this generation coming up here, they are more advanced than we ever hope to be. Just to sit next to one of them with any form of electronic device or computer and you will be immediately humbled. They're not only the future literally, they are a different future because they start with such extraordinary understanding even at a young age, but we can help that along by giving them exposure to the things that they need.

And let's face, for a lot of us when we were coming up, we weren't really given the clearest understanding of our interconnection with nature or what healthy food was or how to live a lifestyle and harmony with everything around us. Well these kids, thanks to all of you are getting

a lot of the right understanding very early on and that's why this is so important, and you know, this work has been going on at the Botanical Garden for a long, long time, and it's been going on outdoors, and outdoors is beautiful and wonderful, but there are times in the year when you can't just be outdoors growing Swiss chard, and you need to be indoors and the Edible Academy is so exciting because it means that so many more people, and so many more young people in particular, are going to have the opportunity year round, and it's going to cultivate healthy habits for a lifetime. This is a beautiful thing.

Each moment in one of those greenhouses is going to help create a healthy life ahead for each of these children and for their families up ahead in the future as well. So, you're doing something amazing here with a huge, lasting effect, and all I want to say to all of you, is to cherish each of these children. Recognize every single one who comes in the door, has an opportunity to live a better life because they came here, and I ask of everyone involved at the Botanical Garden, just keep doing the great work you are doing, but get every child in you can, every additional child, every additional classroom full of kids, makes this a better borough, makes this a better city. So to everyone with deepest appreciation and congratulations, this is a great day for New York City.

Thank you, everyone.

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