

# Texas botanist next garden director

## NCBG's emphasis on preservation was an attraction

From staff reports

**CHAPEL HILL** The N.C. Botanical Garden announced this week the appointment of Damon Waitt as its next director, starting April 13.



Currently, Waitt is the senior director and botanist at the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center in Austin, Texas, one of the country's

most effective advocates for native plants, according to a news release. Waitt supervises the center's gardens and natural areas in addition to spearheading invasive species initiatives, education programs and con-

servation efforts.

"Damon brings with him extensive knowledge and experience in leading and managing a conservation-focused botanical garden that is very similar in values and mission to the North Carolina Botanical Garden," said Carol Tresolini, vice provost for academic initiatives at UNC-Chapel Hill.

Waitt was attracted to the NCBG's focus on conservation.

"I would not have any interest in a botanic garden that was strictly for show," he said. "I am also drawn to the way UNC has always embraced the garden and values its contribution to teaching, research, and public service."

Waitt also looks forward to working with the people at the NCBG. "The passion for and commitment to the garden exhibited by staff,

volunteers, the Botanical Garden Foundation and university is truly exceptional," said Waitt.

"The staff and the Botanical Garden Foundation are excited about the experience and enthusiasm Damon brings with him," said Jonathan Howes, interim director. "We are also looking forward to having a full-time director at the Garden."

Waitt will be the NCBG's third director, following Peter White's return to academics full-time on Jan. 1.

Waitt has a Ph.D. in botany from the University of Texas in Austin, an M.S. in botany from Louisiana State University Baton Rouge, and a B.S. in biology from Tulane University. Waitt serves on the Invasive Species Advisory Committee for the National Invasive Species Council, is founder of the Texas Invasive Plant

## Details

The N.C. Botanical Garden, at 100 Old Mason Farm Road in Chapel Hill, is open seven days a week and admission is free. Information at <http://ncbg.unc.edu>

and Pest Council, and is past chair of the National Association of Exotic Pest Plant Councils.

The NCBG, part of the University of North Carolina, is a 1,000-acre assemblage of display gardens and natural areas. It is nationally known as a center for the study, display, interpretation and conservation of plants. Through its educational, recreational, therapeutic horticulture and research programs, it extends opportunities for connection with nature to people of all abilities and backgrounds.