

HISTORY

The Leach Botanical Garden is the only public garden in Portland's diverse but historically underserved Southeast neighborhood. While most of the property is open to the public, 3+ acres (affectionately known as the "back 5") languished for years under a thick blanket of invasive plants.

In 2018, the LB5 Project formed as a collaboration between the Leach Botanical Garden, the Johnson Creek Watershed Council, The Blueprint Foundation, and Wisdom of the Elders. The African Youth and Community Organization joined in 2019. Other partners have included David Douglas High School, Lents K-8 School, the Friends of Leach Botanical Garden, and scientists and educators from several government agencies.

The LB5's goal was to transform the "back 5" into a healthy ecosystem while providing environmental education and job skills to underserved youth who might otherwise not have access to nature.

FUTURE DREAMS

- To bring expanded programming, such as art and engineering, to the LB5
- Increased public access through infrastructure (trails, interpretive signs, tours) and reduced barriers (more free access to the Garden)
- Creation of a replicable model or blueprint to guide other collaborative projects



The Leach Back 5 Project is an environmental education, workforce development, and habitat restoration initiative based at the Leach Botanical Garden and launched in 2018 as a joint effort between four partner organizations. Four years and several new partners later, the LB5 is a model outdoor classroom which demonstrates the transformative power of diverse collaborations.

LESSONS LEARNED

It's all about change

- Commit to goals, not agendas or methods
- Be flexible; nothing will go as planned!
- Come prepared to learn

Relationships are key

- Invest in relationships. Don't rush them and always show respect
- Know that as you deepen your commitment to equity, you will lose some relationships

Take care of each other

- Everything will take longer than expected; budget extra time to avoid stress.
- Support partner organizations when writing grants
- Feed the kids good food when they come to events!



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SUCCESS STORIES

Specific Events & Projects

- Construction of an amphibian breeding habitat pond
- Clearing 2 acres of invasive plants & replanting with native plants
- Creating multilingual interpretive signs
- Mindfulness practice, restoration, & other activities

Fostering Youth Experiences

- Many youth didn't know the Garden existed!
- New experiences, from holding salamanders to just spending time in nature
- Youth can return to the LB5 over time to see the results of their work

Building Relationships

- Developing authentic relationships between individuals & organizations
- Experiencing different roles within the project over time
- Learning from each other and from the youth themselves

