

## **Arlington Garden: Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access Statement**

In 2005, Charles and Betty McKenney worked with neighbors, the wider community and the City of Pasadena to resurrect nature from an empty lot that was earmarked for the 710 freeway. Historically the construction and placement of freeways have been monuments to structural racism. But, in 2016, the 2.5 acre parcel was rezoned to be open space. Our grassroots founders were inspired to create The McKenney Family Arlington Garden—a beautiful and welcoming place of respite and joy for everyone. This same commitment to community, inclusion, and advocacy for a better world now underpins our dedication to the values of diversity, equity and inclusion.

### **Diversity**

We believe that diversity and equity are our strengths. In the garden, climate appropriate plants and over 400 trees nourish beneficial insects, birds, and animals to build a diverse and healthy garden ecosystem. As with this ecosystem, we believe that building a diverse stakeholder community has fostered a thriving urban habitat. We strive to embody the ecological diversity of our garden, and cultivate a space that embraces human diversity in all socio-economic backgrounds, ethnicities, genders, races, abilities, and levels of education. We want our organization — our board, staff, volunteers, donors, and visitors — to reflect the community, and we will continue to actively take steps to this end, including naming women of color as Executive Director in 2017 and board president in 2020.

### **Access to Nature**

The Gabrielino Tongva/Kizh Gabrielino are the indigenous inhabitants and stewards of the Greater Los Angeles watershed. When Spanish missionaries colonized Pasadena in the 1800s and displaced the Tongva people, the relationship to land shifted to one of ownership and exclusion. As an organization, we recognize this history, and aim to care for our land together and keep it open and accessible to our diverse community.

Our goal has always been to create a garden that is accessible to everybody who wishes to visit , and this is reflected in our mission to be “a climate-appropriate habitat garden offering learning, inspiration and enjoyment, for all.” We believe that all communities should have access to free green space, as well as the healing and restorative powers of nature. The garden is unfenced, free, and open to the community, and, through outreach and education, we strive to ensure that everyone knows they are welcome. Access to green space is especially vital to those who do not have the privilege of a private garden, and we pledge to remain free and open to all.

### **Land Stewardship and Environmental Justice**

To maintain strength in diversity, we must also hold a healthy respect for the land and each other. We value regenerative, climate-appropriate, organic, slow gardening and compassionate listening—practices which provide a healthy habitat for our ecosystem, including us, to thrive. We know that climate change is here. Our garden combats the urban heat island effect and cultivates healthy carbon-sequestering soil. We are redefining beautiful gardens by learning from nature and tending the wild without monoculture crops, pesticides, and gas-powered equipment that increase pollution and contribute to climate change. We do not mow and blow. We know that weeds won't kill us, but chemicals will. We recognize that marginalized communities are most harmed by pollution and climate change. We believe that when we heal

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the earth, we heal ourselves. We believe that by healing environmental and social inequities, we are fighting the destruction of the planet.

### **Our Pledge**

We see Arlington Garden as an invaluable example of how urban landscapes can be transformed into ecologically resilient places that combat climate change and connect people. We pledge to support a diversity of environmentalists while engaging with our community through volunteerism, education, environmental justice, and sustainable regenerative gardening practices. We commit to govern and act from a place of gratitude and principles founded on environmental, cultural, and racial equity. As our commitment to equity continues to evolve, we invite everyone to join our journey of learning, experimentation, tolerance, growth, and positive cultural change. We pledge to listen to all of our stakeholders as the needs of our community change, and we will evolve accordingly.