FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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**Tropical Fern Garden to Open at Flamingo Gardens**  

Davie, FL- Flamingo Gardens Botanical Garden and Everglades Wildlife Sanctuary will open their new Tropical Fern Garden, featuring unusual, rare and endangered ferns and lycophytes from the tropics and subtropics, on March 14, 2020, as part of Flamingo Gardens Exotic Plant Festival & Bonsai Show. The new Tropical Fern Garden features dozens of unusual species of ferns and lycophytes from the Caribbean, the Americas, Africa, Asia and Australia.

Ferns and lycophytes are among the oldest plants on earth, first appearing in the fossil record about 360 million years ago in the late Devonian period, but many of the current families and species did not appear until roughly 145 million years ago in the early Cretaceous period after flowering plants came to dominate many environments.
Many species of ferns have become threatened or endangered due to habitat loss as a result of increased human activity and population expansion. *Ex situ*, or off-site conservation by public gardens, is vital to endangered ferns’ long-term survival. Central to this effort is planning and building fern collections, like the one planned at Flamingo Gardens, as a global safety net against plant extinction. This collection represents unusual, rare, threatened or endangered fern species from Florida and around the world.

Ferns are part of a group of vascular plants that reproduce via spores and have neither seeds nor flowers. They differ from mosses by being vascular, i.e., having specialized tissues that conduct water and nutrients, in having branched stems and in having life cycles in which the sporophyte is the dominant phase.

Most ferns are leptosporangiate ferns, sometimes referred to as true ferns, which produce coiled fiddleheads that uncoil and expand into fronds. The group includes about 10,560 known extant species. Eusporangiate ferns typically have reduced root
systems and sporangia that produce large amounts of spores, such as horsetails or scouring rushes, whisk ferns, marattioid ferns, and ophioglossoid ferns.

Lycophytes are similar to ferns but have unique leaves called ‘microphylls’ which have only a single vein. This group includes club mosses, quillwort and spike mosses (often called tassle ferns).

The new Fern Garden has been two years under construction since Hurricane Irma destroyed the first Australian Tree ferns planted in the area. The garden had to wait while new trees were planted and matured enough to provide the necessary tree canopy to protect the delicate plants from sun.

Joe Parr, Director of Horticulture at Flamingo Gardens, explains the garden design.
“We wanted an intimate oasis of green foliage under the massive canopy of the strangler fig, so we planted red leaf palms to bring down the scale of the garden and a trickling fountain to give it a calm, meditative atmosphere.”

The planting areas are raised beds bordered by natural coral rock walls, kept moist by an irrigation system and humid by daily automatic misters. Each fern is marked by plant identification tags for easy and convenient identification. Notable specimens are the giant Australian King Fern (angiopteris evecta), one of the largest fern species on the planet with fronds reaching 20 feet in length, and a rare native Florida Tree Fern which is the only tree fern in the continental United States.

Flamingo Gardens’ new Tropical Fern Garden is open daily to the public 9:30am to 5:00pm and is included with admission to Flamingo Gardens: $21.95 ages 12+, $15.95 ages 3-11, and free for children age 2 and under as well as members of Flamingo Gardens. The last tickets are sold at 4:00pm. Flamingo Gardens is located at 3750 S Flamingo Rd. in Davie, FL. For more information visit www.flamingogardens.org or call (954) 473-2955.

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**About Flamingo Gardens**
Flamingo Gardens is a nonprofit botanical garden and wildlife sanctuary located in Fort Lauderdale, (Davie) Florida. The botanical garden features over 3000 species of rare & exotic, tropical, subtropical, and native plants and trees. Flamingo Gardens Everglades Wildlife Sanctuary is home to permanently injured and rescued Florida native wildlife including alligators, bobcats, a black bear, eagles, otters, panthers, peacock, and of course, flamingos! Flamingo Gardens is located at 3750 S Flamingo Rd, in Davie, FL 33330. For more information call (954) 473-2955 or visit www.flamingogardens.org