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## Morton Arboretum launches \$63 million capital campaign

By Lisa Bertagnoli June 20, 2016

Money doesn't grow on trees, so **Morton Arboretum** has begun a \$63 million campaign to expand its conservation work and spruce up its 1,700-acre spread in Lisle.

The five-year campaign, dubbed Growing Brilliantly, was announced to private donors in 2014 and has raised \$35.6 million. That sum includes the biggest gifts in the arboretum's history: \$3 million from an Arboretum trustee; \$3 million, and \$1 million in matching funds, from the Hamill Family Foundation for the arboretum's science and conservation programs; and \$2.3 million from the Daniel P. Haerther Fund.

Proceeds will be used to deepen the arboretum's conservation and scientific programs, as well as revamp the Children's Garden and South Farm. First up for renovation: South Farm, the arboretum's plant-production and operations hub. The renovation will include 5,400 square feet of new greenhouse space and is scheduled to be completed in late 2017.

South Farm houses the arboretum's tree-development program, which produces hybrid trees that are both beautiful and disease-resistant, says Gerard Donnelly, CEO of Morton Arboretum. Chicago and the seven counties in and around it are home to 157 million trees, he says, most of which belong to one of 10 species. That means "our eggs are in fewer baskets" when a blight or bug like the emerald ash borer is introduced into the tree environment, Donnelly says.

Among the arboretum's successful tree projects: **Accolade Elm**, or Ulmus Morton, a hybrid Asian elm that took decades to develop and now grows in Millennium Park and on the city's medians. New tree projects will help develop trees adaptable to whatever climate change might bring, Donnelly says.

Growing Brilliantly is the second capital campaign in the arboretum's 94 years of existence. The first, Branching Out, was undertaken in the early 2000s and raised \$18 million. "That signified an invitation to the public to come to what had been a private, quiet enterprise," Donnelly says. The arboretum saw fruits of that campaign in 2015, when it welcomed a record 1 million-plus visitors.

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