



BOK TOWER GARDENS

President Search

Position Guide · January 2026

Search for
President
Bok Tower Gardens

1	OVERVIEW
2	ABOUT BOK TOWER GARDENS
5	THE OPPORTUNITY
7	SUMMARY OF POSITION AND CANDIDATE PROFILE
10	COMPENSATION, BENEFITS & APPLICATION FOR POSITION

Position	President
Reports to	Board of Directors
Location	Lake Wales, FL



MISSION

To elevate Edward Bok's gift so that all who visit will be inspired to make the world a bit better or more beautiful because they have lived in it.

VISION

Bok Tower Gardens preserves the legacy of Edward Bok by sharing a public garden which provides extraordinary experiences in horticultural design, musical excellence, innovative programming, and conservation leadership.

CORE VALUES

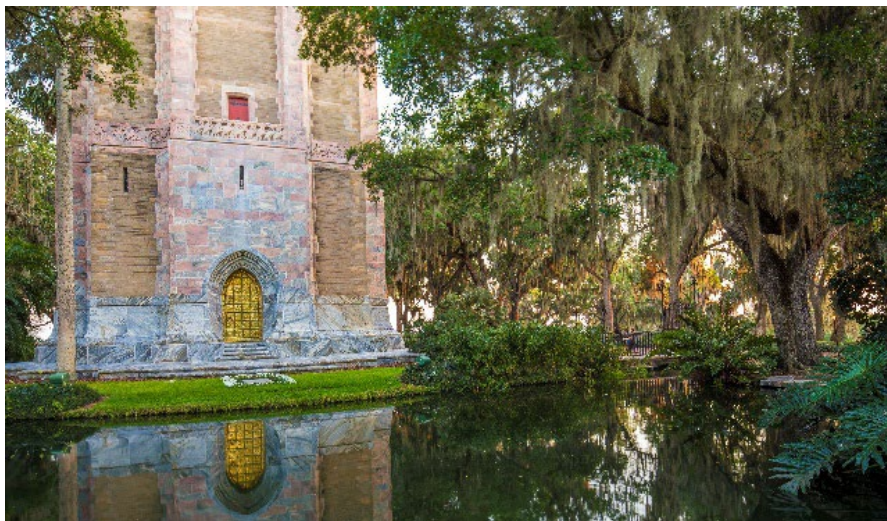
Our values reflect who we are and what we stand for as an organization. We live and value the following:

- **The Inspiration of Beauty**
We touch souls with the influence of beauty.
- **A Connection to Nature and Culture**
We provide an unparalleled visitor experience that fosters a deeper connection to nature, music, art, culture, and history promoting conservation and preservation.
- **Respect for People and All Living Things**
We welcome, encourage, and value the contributions of all.
- **The Desire for Lifelong Learning**
We encourage our team and visitors to explore, discover, and share knowledge.
- **Stewardship of Resources**
We safeguard and optimize resources to develop a strong, resilient, and sustainable organization.
- **A Culture of Philanthropy**
We cultivate and nurture relationships with our stakeholders, receive their generosity with gratitude, and use the resources they entrust to us with care.

Bok Tower Gardens (the Gardens) has offered some of Florida's most remarkable experiences to more than 20 million visitors since its dedication in 1929 by President Calvin Coolidge. Located approximately 55 miles southwest of Orlando and east of Tampa near Lake Wales, the Gardens was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1993.

Beginning as a nature preserve and native plant garden, the first section of the garden was opened in 1924 and dedicated to "provide a retreat of repose and natural beauty for the human, a refuge for the bird, and a place for the student of southern plant and animal life" by its founder Edward W. Bok. It was one of the first public gardens comprised entirely of native plants. The Gardens were designed by the Olmsted Brothers Firm, which had been working in the adjacent Mountain Lake Community since 1915. Today, the combined files of Mountain Lake and Bok Tower Gardens are the largest in the National Olmsted Archives.

Edward W. Bok immigrated to America from the Netherlands. Through determination and hard work, he became a highly successful publisher, Pulitzer Prize-winning author, respected humanitarian, and advocate of world peace and the environment. Bok's grandmother told him to "make the world a bit better or more beautiful because you have lived in it," which he did throughout his lifetime. His wife, Mary Louise Curtis Bok, created the Curtis Institute of Music while Edward built the Gardens.



ABOUT BOK TOWER GARDENS, *continued*

The wooded landscape gardens sit atop Iron Mountain, one of the highest points in the state. Olmsted utilized the commanding vistas, adjacent pinelands, and citrus groves as key attributes in the design. The Gardens were designed to harmonize nature, agriculture, the planted garden, and architecture as a meditative setting. The Gardens surround a 205-foot pink marble and coquina tower with art deco sculpture representing native plants and animals of the region. Architect Milton Medary won the AIA Gold Medal in 1930 for his design featuring the art of sculptor Lee Lawrie, iron artist Samuel Yellin, and mosaicist JH Dulles Allen. One of the world's finest 60-bell carillons is housed in the tower. The 60-ton carillon was the heaviest in the world at the time it was installed. The Gardens has always employed the world's best carillonneurs as full-time artists. Today, carillonneur Geert D'hollander performs, composes, teaches, and tours internationally. The Blanchard Carillon Fellowship attracts top carillon students internationally to study and perform here.

In 1970, the Gardens purchased the adjacent historic El Retiro house, located in the 1915 Olmsted-designed Mountain Lake Community. Today, the house and grounds are open for visitation as a museum house complete with original furnishings. The 7.5-acre grounds and 20-room Mediterranean-style mansion were listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1985.

Since 1990, the property owned and managed by the Gardens has grown from 125 acres to 958 acres. An active land preservation program has included the purchase and protection of former citrus lands to restore to longleaf pine habitat, expand wildlands, and safeguard vistas. The Gardens helped start the Green Horizon Land Trust to preserve over 6,600 acres in the region over the past three decades. In 1970, the Gardens worked with The Nature Conservancy to preserve Tiger Creek Preserve, a 5,000-acre preserve near the Gardens.



The Gardens welcomes 270,000 visitors annually and has 10,000 household members. In 2016, after a \$17 million capital campaign, a 10-acre garden expansion opened. Thomas Woltz of Nelson Byrd Woltz designed the new gardens, using architecture from Lake Flato. The expansion included a Florida Wild Garden, Edible Garden and Outdoor Kitchen, Pollinator Garden, Oval Lawn Amphitheater, Hammock Hollow Children's Garden, accessible path system through the historic gardens, and renovations to the visitor center and exhibit hall. The campus facilities include a 42,000 square-foot visitor center housing an exhibit hall, café, gift shop, meeting rooms, and offices. The in-house managed café and gift shop generate \$3.5 million in annual revenue. Other campus buildings include four historic structures, each 100 years old, 9,800 square feet of greenhouse space, office buildings, storage, and support facilities, totaling 24 buildings. Education and cultural programs and events are hosted throughout the year. Outdoor concerts are held seasonally on the Oval Lawn amphitheater. In 2024, the Gardens completed a Cultural Landscape Report by Heritage Landscapes Inc. as part of a National Park Service grant in preparation for restoration and preservation projects with a renewed emphasis on fidelity to the historic design, native plants, and wildlife.

The Gardens' conservation program has supported land preservation and restoration, as well as the Rare Plant Conservation Program, as part of the Center for Plant Conservation since 1986. Within an hour's drive of the Gardens are over 500,000 acres of local, state, federal, and non-governmental conservation lands. Many conservation organizations utilize the Gardens' facilities for meetings and workshops.

The Gardens has an annual operating budget of \$10 million and a dedicated staff of 91 professionals, governed by a committed 13-member Board of Directors. Each year, the Gardens welcomes 200+ volunteers from the broader community.

To learn more about the Gardens, please visit <https://boktowergardens.org/>.

Bok Tower Gardens is known for being a magnificent place for people to escape the busy world and soak up the beauty and nature that is showcased on the grounds.

The next President will guide the Gardens through the last phase of the 2022-2027 strategic plan and build upon the strong success of the past years. In 2029, the Gardens will celebrate its centennial, and the next President will have the opportunity to lead the organization through that commemoration and drive excitement and fundraising initiatives.

The organization has enjoyed a stable financial position with growth and assistance from its \$60 million endowment. The next leader will optimize all revenue streams, balancing financial growth with a commitment to elevating the visitor experience.

In the organization's strategic plan, the five-year focus is on strengthening their commitment to the original mission and purpose as envisioned by Edward Bok, improving and preserving the Gardens, and advancing five strategic priorities:

- *Horticulture as Art*: Raising the level of excellence in horticulture to delight and inspire.
- *Excellence in Experiential Learning*: Establishing creative, relevant, and engaging learning programs for our daily visitors and members.
- *Visitor Experience*: Providing every visitor with an inspiring experience and maintaining a culture of accessibility and inclusion.
- *Sustainability*: Meeting the economic, environmental and social needs for future generations.
- *Art of the Carillon*: Delivering a diverse program of music and cultural experiences.



As the Gardens focus on the strategic priorities and care for their key assets, there are four objectives to pursue for the next five years:

- Preserve historic assets;
- Amplify the visitor experience, foster relevance and enhance facilities;
- Foster continued leadership;
- Plan for sustainable growth.

In recent years there has been significant population growth, housing development, and demographic shifts in central Florida. This presents both opportunities and challenges for the Gardens. Land preservation and acquisition are of great importance and interest for the organization. Rapid population growth in the area presents opportunities for expanded membership, community outreach, and philanthropic connections.

The organization will have a stronger presence statewide and tap into the robust tourism market and increasing population in Florida. The focus to best situate the Gardens through strategic marketing and positioning will be important.



The President provides visionary leadership and strategic direction for Bok Tower Gardens; an esteemed nearly 100-year-old nonprofit public garden and cultural institution centered around a historic Olmsted-designed landscape and iconic carillon tower.

This role requires a commitment to promote, inform, and preserve the essence of Bok Tower Gardens. The position will guide the senior management team, oversee high-level strategy, manage a \$10 million annual budget, spearhead fundraising efforts, foster community engagement, and develop programs that fulfill the Gardens' mission and goals. This role reports directly to the Board of Directors.

Key Responsibilities include:

1. STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

- Guide the strategic direction of the Gardens, ensuring alignment with its mission and vision.
- Inspire and motivate staff, volunteers, and the community while fostering collaboration with the Board of Directors.
- Develop innovative strategies to enhance the Gardens' relevance and public engagement.

2. FINANCIAL OVERSIGHT AND REVENUE GENERATION

- Collaborate with the CFO to prepare budgets, monitor financial performance, and ensure long-term sustainability.
- Oversee earned income areas (café, gift shop, events, and rentals) to deliver high quality visitor experience and drive revenue growth.

3. FUNDRAISING AND PHILANTHROPY

- Lead comprehensive fundraising efforts with the philanthropy team and Board to secure donations, sponsorships, grants, and in-kind contributions.
- Cultivate relationships with donors, sponsors, and community groups to support financial sustainability.

4. STEWARDSHIP OF CORE ASSETS

- Preserve and enhance the Gardens' historical structures, green spaces, and carillon while adhering to preservation standards and horticultural best practices.
- Champion sustainable practices in landscape management and operations.

5. COMMUNITY AND VISITOR ENGAGEMENT

- Advocate within conservation, horticultural, and cultural arts communities, as well as local and state governments.
- Promote education initiatives, including classes, guided walks, exhibits, and digital content, to engage visitors and foster learning.
- Ensure the Gardens are welcoming, accessible, and focused on customer satisfaction.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

- Lead conservation efforts, including habitat restoration, endangered species preservation, and biodiversity awareness.
- Promote sustainability in resource management and waste reduction.

7. STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND LEADERSHIP

- Recruit, train, mentor, and retain talented staff while fostering an inclusive and collaborative organizational culture.

8. ADVOCACY AND NETWORKING

- Represent the Gardens in regional, national, and global discussions on public gardens, conservation, and environmental stewardship.
- Build partnerships with nonprofit organizations, environmental groups, and civic leaders.

9. EVENT PLANNING AND PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

- Strategically guide event planning and program development to ensure alignment with the Gardens' mission and values while contributing to its success.



SUMMARY OF POSITION AND CANDIDATE PROFILE, *continued*

The ideal candidate is a charismatic and outgoing individual who is comfortable being the face of the organization, engaging with donors, guests, and stakeholders in meaningful ways. With strong leadership qualities and a servant leader approach, this person will inspire and empower their team, providing autonomy while fostering collaboration and growth.

The candidate should possess exceptional financial and business acumen, coupled with a pragmatic and optimistic outlook. The position demands a creative thinker and calculated risk-taker, unafraid to embrace technology and innovation to enhance guest and community experiences. A high level of emotional intelligence (EQ) and executive functioning is essential, enabling them to read people effectively, build trust, and navigate complex situations with grace and determination.

This leader will have a deep respect for the legacy of Edward Bok, the Olmsted firm and a commitment to preserving and maintaining the assets of the Gardens. Experience with gardens or public spaces is highly valued, as is a love for the arts and music. The candidate should embody a mission-focused mindset, ensuring the organization's values and goals are at the forefront of their decision-making.

The ideal candidate for this role is a confident communicator and inspirational speaker with exceptional fundraising acumen and a proven ability to cultivate relationships that drive philanthropic support. They are high-energy, approachable, and possess a sense of humor, making them a natural connector, and motivator. Trustworthy, kind, and determined, the candidate demonstrates courage in taking calculated risks and resilience in overcoming challenges. As a big-picture planner with strategic vision and attention to detail, they ensure the organization's long-term success while fostering a culture of growth, gratitude, and innovation aligned with the mission and values. Senior-level leadership experience in a destination-type venue focused on delivering an extraordinary visitor experience is highly desirable, along with a demonstrated passion for public gardens, though specific experience in this area is not required.



Bok Tower Gardens offers a competitive salary and benefits package.

The salary range for this position is between \$235,000-265,000 and will be commensurate with experience. Benefits include but are not limited to paid time off, (9) paid holidays, healthcare/dental/vision/life insurance, and an employer contribution to a 403(B) retirement.

How to apply

Applications and nominations are being received by Kittleman & Associates, LLC. To apply, please send a current resume and letter of interest to www.kittlemansearch.com/bok-tower-gardens-president (click on the Apply button at the bottom of the page). For best consideration, please submit your materials by February 20, 2026.

