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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The 21st Annual Waterlily Celebration

Saturday, June 13, 2026 | 8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

VERO BEACH, FL – May 18, 2026 – The ponds and winding waterways of McKee Botanical Garden are home to one of Florida’s largest and most celebrated collections of waterlilies. For more than two decades, the community has gathered each June to celebrate these aquatic blooms during one of the peak flowering seasons for waterlilies in Florida. What many visitors may not realize is that much of the waterlily system flourishing throughout McKee’s iconic watery maze has been continuously growing since the inaugural Waterlily Celebration. While new blossoms emerge each season, the plants themselves remain deeply rooted in the Garden’s living history as McKee celebrates the 25th anniversary of the Garden’s reopening this year.

McKee Botanical Garden’s *Nymphaea* collection (waterlilies) has been recognized by the International Waterlily and Water Gardening Society (IWGS) as a Collection of Excellence — a distinction shared by only seven gardens worldwide, including institutions in England, France, Spain, New York, Denver, and Texas. While this honor may not be widely known to casual visitors, within the world of aquatic horticulture it establishes McKee as a destination of global significance, attracting enthusiasts, collectors, and experts alike.

This year marks the 21st annual celebration spotlighting the Garden’s aquatic stars and carrying this beloved tradition into its third decade. The festivities draw thousands of visitors each year and feature a popular photography competition that attracts more than 60 amateur and professional photographers seeking the perfect shot — often capturing bees, dragonflies, and other pollinators visiting the blooms. Plein-air artists line the historic pond edges, channeling their inner Monet as they interpret the waterlilies through brush and palette.

McKee's Aquatics and Water Gardens Collection Specialist, Nikki Wojtowicz, who played a key role in achieving the IWGS designation, shares her expertise and enthusiasm through live repotting demonstrations and engaging presentations about the Garden's collection. Visitors can also browse vendor booths featuring Aquatic Systems & Resources, Funky Air Plants, Odom's Orchids and local artisans offering botanical soaps, lotions, and body care products. McKee's Garden Café will feature a special menu from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Tickets can be purchased online at mckee garden.org or at the ticket window, advance registration is not required.

One of the highlights of McKee's Annual Waterlily Celebration is the Waterlily Photo Contest, inviting both McKee members and the public to showcase their photography skills. Entries must feature waterlilies and lotus captured at McKee Botanical Garden. Submission details and guidelines can be found at [233424 Photo Guidelines Document Design V2.indd](#)

Beyond its international acclaim, McKee Botanical Garden has also received national recognition as the recipient of The Garden Conservancy's Jean and John Greene Prize for Excellence in American Gardening — further affirming Vero Beach's first and oldest visitor attraction's enduring commitment to horticultural excellence.

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McKee Botanical Garden is the first and oldest visitor attraction in Vero Beach. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places and designated a Florida Heritage Landmark, McKee is also the recipient of The Garden Conservancy's Jean and John Greene Prize for Excellence in American Gardening and is one of only seven gardens in the world with a certified Collection of Excellence by the International Waterlily and Water Gardening Society.

Founded in 1922 by early developers and conservationists Arthur McKee and Waldo Sexton, McKee operated beginning in 1926 as The Royal Park Exotic Nursery and later became an internationally renowned visitor attraction from 1932 until its sale to developers in 1976. The remaining 18 acres of the historic garden were held as collateral until the developer received final payment. When plans were announced to bulldoze what had once been the heart of the garden, an unprecedented community effort emerged to rescue, restore, and reopen the historic property.

Today, McKee Botanical Garden features 10,000 tropical plants, internationally renowned exhibitions, the Treasure Coast's largest holiday light display, JUNGLE LIGHTS, the Children's Garden, the Garden Café, the Garden Gift & Book Shop, and year-round educational programs for adults and children. Supported by more than 7,000 members, hundreds of volunteers, and record-breaking annual attendance, McKee remains a testament to both the resilience of nature and the dedication of the community it serves.