

Madison Square Park Conservancy Presents *Lily Kwong: Gardens of Renewal*

Madison Square Park | New York, NY
On View April 22-September 1, 2025



Gardens of Renewal, Photo Credit: Rashmi Gill Photography.

Madison Square Park Conservancy is pleased to announce *Gardens of Renewal*, a collaborative project between artist Lily Kwong and the Conservancy that explores the ecological potential of the built environment while underscoring the political urgency of the climate crisis. Across two separate yet interconnected immersive landscapes, Kwong reaffirms the importance of public parks to our individual and collective wellbeing by highlighting their ability to facilitate spiritual renewal and political consciousness in equal measure. To further reinforce the project's emphasis on environmental protection, sustainability and stewardship, it will open to the public on Earth Day, which falls on April 22.

Gardens of Renewal takes shape across the park's Redbud and Sparrow Lawns, each with an intricate pathway that provides visitors with opportunities for play, learning, self-reflection and ecological awakening. Redbud Lawn features the *Meditation Garden*, where Kwong, working closely with Madison Square Park Conservancy's world-class horticulture team, has created a layout blooming with pollinators, herbs and other plants native to the New York region. The spiral

pathway follows a narrative arc that recalls ancient labyrinths; as visitors venture deeper into the center of the garden, the planting palette features increasingly more rare and disappearing native plants, those which are having their very existence threatened by climate change. Though meant to provide an important oasis for rest and reflection within the dense urban landscape of New York City, the garden also creates a space for communal exchange, where our connection to the people and world around us can be celebrated. Through the structure of its design and the integration of native, rare and endangered plant species, the *Meditation Garden* prompts each of us to consider what is at stake and all that we stand to lose as a result of climate change.

Situated on Sparrow Lawn is the *Children's Garden*, a multi-functional site featuring a library, a stage and play structures that promote adventure, creativity and ecological awareness. Conceived by Kwong in collaboration with Madison Square Park Conservancy's horticulture and art teams, with the overall structure design led by Lily Consuelo Saporta Tagiuri, the Children's Garden will be home to a running series of conversations, performances and educational programming where children of all ages can read, create, perform, explore, play and activate these spaces in whatever ways their imaginations lead them. Mirroring the planting palette of Redbud Lawn's *Meditation Garden*, the species featured here are all native to this region. With its emphasis on the beauty, diversity and complexity of the natural world, the *Children's Garden* aims to plant the seeds of responsibility in the environmental stewards of tomorrow.

While both gardens can be experienced as each visitor wishes, they also have QR codes for the curious to access a range of supplemental materials. Among them are an illustrated field guide plant list, a meditation designed to unfold over the length and duration of the Meditation Garden spiral by sound practitioner Sandra Sears and a customized playlist that provides a sonic landscape by DJ Fly Hendrix that expresses the spirit and texture of the gardens themselves.

"Madison Square Park's central location makes it the perfect New York City oasis and a transformative site for the convergence of big ideas," said Kwong. "It is a groundbreaking platform for artists, designers, urban planners, philosophers, community leaders, entrepreneurs and radical thinkers to come together to face the greatest existential threat of our time—climate collapse—through powerful artistic, cultural and horticultural works to inspire the millions of people that pass through its green gates."

In keeping with Kwong's practice of ensuring the plants she uses have a second life after the conclusion of a given project, Madison Square Park Conservancy has partnered with the Flatiron Nomad Alliance to see that the plants from *Gardens of Renewal* are replanted in the park and in nearby tree pits and planters, effectively creating a pollinator corridor in the surrounding neighborhood. Just as the gardens will change and evolve over the course of the summer, so too will the many plant species continue to live and provide food and habitat for the broader non-human residents of New York City, demonstrating the capacity for nature's renewal even in our most urban settings.

"An installation fully dedicated to horticulture and the vital role native plantings play in our wellbeing is unprecedented in Madison Square Park," said Holly Leicht, Executive Director of Madison Square Park Conservancy. "We are thrilled to partner with Lily Kwong to bring her passion for ecological conservation and her vision for reconnecting us to nature and each other so beautifully and joyously to life."

Gardens of Renewal Free Public Programs

May 31 | 10AM-2PM

Family Day (Sparrow Lawn)

10:30AM-12PM: Children's Comedian Storytime with Nick Kroll & Friends (*adults must accompany a child to enter the garden*)

1-2 PM: Family Music Concert

June 4 | 5PM & 6 PM

Artist Walks with Lily Kwong (Meet at Sparrow Lawn)

June 11 | 5-7PM

Workshop: Make Your Own Seed Bombs (Sparrow Lawn)

June 12 | 5-7PM

Artist Panel Discussion (Sparrow Lawn)

June 14 | 8AM & 9AM

Morning Meditations & Manifestation with Lily Kwong & Sandra Sears (Redbud Lawn)

June 14 | 10:30AM-12PM

Children's Comedian Storytime with Nick Kroll & Friends (Sparrow Lawn)
(*adults must accompany a child to enter the garden*)

June 15 | 1-3PM

Workshop: Make Your Own Rain Sticks (Sparrow Lawn)

June 16 | 5:30PM

Gardens of Renewal Summer Celebration (Remarks on Sparrow Lawn)

June 18 | 3-5PM

Workshop: Blockprinting with Vegetables (Sparrow Lawn)

June 21 | 1-3PM

Workshop: Build Your Own Solitary Bee Home (Sparrow Lawn)

June 25 | 5-7PM

Workshop: Seeding Dreams and Manifestations (Sparrow Lawn)

July 12 | 1-3PM

Guided Meditation in the Garden of Renewal (Redbud Lawn)

July 13 | 1-3PM

Workshop: Seed Saving (Sparrow Lawn)

July 15 | 5-7PM

Pollinator Flower Walk (Sparrow Lawn)

July 20 | 1-3PM

Workshop: Leaf Tapping and Printmaking (Sparrow Lawn)

July 23 | 1-3PM

Workshop: Cyanotyping (Sparrow Lawn)

July 29 | 5-7PM

Horticulture Panel Discussion (Sparrow Lawn)

Exhibition Support

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About Lily Kwong

Lily Kwong is a landscape artist with roots in the urban planning and design worlds whose mission is to reconnect people to nature. Lily specializes in creating transformative environments that combine visual arts, horticulture, design and education to create cultural experiences that harmonize people with their environment. She earned her degree in Urban Studies from Columbia University and took courses in the New York Botanical Garden's landscape certificate program. Lily was named by The New York Times as one of the '9 Young New Yorkers Poised for Creative Greatness,' inducted into Forbes's '30 Under 30: 2018' in the Art & Style category, and has received numerous accolades from Elle Decor's A-list 2019 to ARCHMARATHON and Dezeen Awards for her celebrated Glossier installation in 2020. Lily's work has been featured by the New York Times, New Yorker, Vogue, Architectural Digest, Forbes, Fast Company and many more. She served as Landscape Editor for Cultured Magazine and was a member of the NEW INC program, the New Museum's incubator. Studio Lily Kwong's botanical art installations have been featured at New York Botanical Garden, The High Line, Grand Central's iconic Vanderbilt Hall, the Night Gallery and more.

About Madison Square Park Conservancy

Madison Square Park Conservancy is the nonprofit entrusted by the City of New York to operate Madison Square Park, a 6.2-acre public space in the heart of Manhattan. Our mission is to conserve, maintain, and program this ever-evolving historic green space, including raising 100% of the park's operating budget. Our dedicated team takes great pride in caring for and shaping an urban oasis for all to enjoy.