

## **Melissa G. Patrino Joins Santa Barbara Botanic Garden**

*The Garden welcomes former Just Communities ED as its Director of Development*



**Santa Barbara, Calif. – November 23, 2021** – The Santa Barbara Botanic Garden is proud to welcome Melissa G. Patrino as its new Director of Development. Melissa will join The Garden’s leadership team officially in January 2022 and report to its Executive Director, Dr. Steve Windhager.

“I’m excited to welcome Melissa to The Garden as the newest member of our senior leadership team,” **said Steve Windhager, Ph.D., Executive Director of Santa Barbara Botanic Garden.** “Melissa has demonstrated abilities with community organizing, effective communication, fund raising, and strategic leadership and she is also bilingual. As The Garden works to introduce native plants to a broader section of our community, I feel fortunate to have a person of her caliber on our team.”

Melissa is joining The Garden from Just Communities where she served since 2018, more recently moving into the role as its Executive Director. Prior to this, Melissa relocated to Santa Barbara from Napa, California, bringing over 15 years of experience working with the Latine community. As the Executive Director of Puertas Abiertas Community Resource Center, she set the organization’s vision while managing financials, grants, and reports. Earlier in her career, her passion for politics led her to work for Congressman Mike Thompson D-5, as a field representative and case worker for seven years.

“Growing up in El Salvador, I was surrounded by nature - creeks, tropical flowers and plants, and mango and avocado trees. That was my playground and backyard,” **said Melissa G. Patrino, Director of Development at Santa Barbara Botanic Garden.** “We are so fortunate to have the Botanic Garden as our own backyard, and I am excited to join the team and assist in furthering its mission to protect and conserve native plants.”



Currently, Melissa sits on the Board of Directors for the Santa Barbara County Immigrant Legal Resource Center, and the Girsh Park Foundation. She is a graduate of the Hispanas Organized for Political Equality (HOPE) Leadership Institute and has a Master's degree in Political Management from George Washington University, and a Bachelor's degree in Politics and Anthropology from Brandeis University.

“In addition to her professional skills, I love the fact that Melissa has begun turning her yard into a Monarch Butterfly sanctuary during the pandemic. She is already an authentic advocate of The Garden's mission,”  
**added Windhager.**

The Garden is open to the public daily from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and offers a members-only hour from 9 - 10 a.m. For more information on Santa Barbara Botanic Garden or its plans for 2022, please visit [sbbg.org](http://sbbg.org).

### **About Santa Barbara Botanic Garden**

As the first botanic garden in the nation to focus exclusively on native plants, the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden has dedicated nearly a century of work to better understand the relationship between plants and people. Growing from 13 acres in 1926 to today's 78 acres, the grounds now include more than 5 miles of walking trails, an herbarium, seed bank, research labs, library, and a public native plant nursery. Amid the serene beauty of The Garden, teams of scientists, educators, and horticulturists remain committed to the original spirit of the organization's founders – conserve CA native plants and habitats to ensure they continue to support life on the planet and can be enjoyed for generations to come.

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