



CASE STUDY

Desert Botanical Garden

Inspiring Giving for
a Year-End Appeal

MAXI Award Winner



BACKGROUND

Among 2020's many lessons was how important nature is to our overall well-being. When schools and offices closed, Americans turned to parks, trails, and beaches to temporarily escape the troubling reality of the pandemic.

We as humans have a deep connection with nature, and thankfully there are amazing organizations like the Desert Botanical Garden that help conserve beautiful and unique natural environments so that we can keep exploring.



In 1939, the Desert Botanical Garden was founded with a mission to provide educational and exhibition opportunities while conducting world-class research and conservation efforts to protect and preserve desert plants. That mission still holds true today, as the Garden is home to over 50,000 plant species spanning 140 acres of the Sonoran Desert. It's also one of only 24 botanical gardens accredited by the American Alliance of Museums.

Like many other visitor-based establishments, the Garden was deeply impacted by the pandemic. After over six months of cancelled programs and severely restricted visitor hours, an end-of-year boost to its donor program was vital to sustain its important work.

CHALLENGES

The key challenge that the Garden faced was to graciously galvanize support through cost-effective tactics that would generate a high ROI during a year when visitation and programs—and therefore associated revenue—were severely reduced.

OBJECTIVE

We had two main objectives: develop a comprehensive understanding of the Garden's donor program and unique year-end annual fund appeal challenges and craft a direct mail campaign that would drum up support and inspire donations.

TLC SOLUTIONS

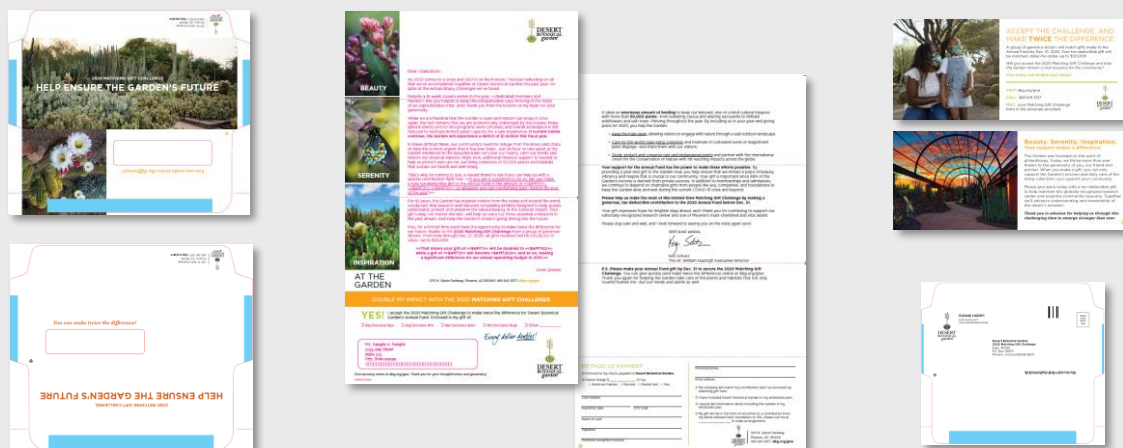
The Garden is a tranquil, beautiful place. The exhibits and plant displays are incredible, and its conservation efforts are hugely impactful to not only the Sonoran Desert, but also desert flora worldwide. After nearly eight months of pandemic-driven unease, it was important to remind donors of every level that the Garden is a place for hope, healing, and respite.

Since most Arizonans were still spending the majority of their time at home, we opted to deliver the Garden's request for support right to donors' mailboxes through a creative direct mail campaign. A two-drop campaign was scheduled to deploy in November with the goal of maximizing the Garden's internal list and ending 2020 on a high note.

Developing eye-catching creative and heartfelt messaging were key to generating support and donations during this tumultuous time. Every part of the year-end annual fund appeal focused on the importance of preserving the Garden's peaceful, healing, and inspiring nature.

TLC tested a two-color carrier against a four-color envelope that featured bright photographs of flowers and plants and beckoned donors to "Help Ensure the Garden's Future." Inside, a letter and reply form included more engaging photography and a moving note from the Executive Director.

The letter encouraged donors to take advantage of a limited time \$50,000 matching gift opportunity that would greatly enhance the Garden's ability to provide world-class programming, exhibits, and conservation efforts. In addition, a full-color insert detailed the various ways that donors could assist the Garden and how each donation made an impact.



When it came to targeting, we dug into the Garden's internal database and identified three audience segments: past donors, current members, and internal prospects. We used variable copy that was tailored to each distinct audience. We also distinguished a small subset of VIP donors. The packages for these donors were separated and sent to the Garden's Executive Director to be personally signed before being mailed out.

With the goal being to maximize year-end giving with a limited internal list, TLC decided to deploy a second mail drop three weeks later. Creative remained consistent with the initial drop, though letter copy was updated to create a sense of urgency to donate: the match opportunity wouldn't last forever, and it was imperative that donors give before the upcoming deadline.

By emphasizing the limited-time matching gift opportunity and unique beauty that the Garden works so hard to conserve and share with the world, the year-end giving campaign was positioned to spark a strong response from donors past and present.

RESULTS

The direct mail campaign more than doubled the expected response and tripled the revenue goal.



By appealing to donors' desires to support a place of tranquility, growth, and beauty, TLC was able to ignite results that surpassed its \$50,000 match promotion.



**2x
Response**



**3x
Revenue**



**\$6.74
ROI**

With an impressive \$6.74 ROI, the revenue generated from this single campaign provided a path for the Garden to continue its important conservation efforts and plan for future programs and exhibits. And while both carriers produced an equal response, the four-color carrier generated a significant number of gifts at higher giving levels, outweighing the additional printing costs and resulting in a higher overall ROI.

By combining our decades of experience in direct mail, data-driven methodologies, and creative design, we developed an incredibly successful campaign that contributed to furthering the Garden's important work.



Are you ready to grow your membership, raise more funds, and increase your impact?

Whether you're refreshing your membership program, ramping up fundraising, or generating support for a new exhibit, we can provide you with dynamic strategies that champion your cause.

Get in touch with our team of experts to begin crafting data-driven, creative, and cost-effective communications that are finely tuned to your audience.

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