E veryone eats food. From birth until death, food is one of the continuous threads that bind all humans together. Everyone needs food, and the majority of the food we eat comes directly from plants or from animals that predominately eat plant-based diets. That is to say, almost all food derives from plants grown on farms.

Unfortunately, the average American is no longer intimately connected to agriculture. In the U.S., we have gone from more than 70% of the workforce working directly in agriculture in the 19th century to less than 2% now. As agricultural jobs have moved to other industries, populations have clustered more and more in urban environments, with 80% of the U.S. now living in urban centers. To put it simply, most people no longer live near agricultural production and just don’t see it.

But there is strong resurgent interest in food and agriculture driven primarily by the desire to eat healthfully and social concerns related to perceptions of agricultural production. In the country’s urban centers, this has manifested in renewed interest in agricultural systems, with particular emphasis on farm-to-table restaurants and urban farming examples including rooftop and hydroponic agriculture. While it is unlikely that urban-based agricultural systems will replace the extensive system of agriculture we have in place anytime soon, this urban interest in food and agriculture nonetheless represents an opportunity to reverse the decades of waning visibility of the agricultural system to the end consumer (i.e., eaters). What are desperately needed are urban nodes of science-based education that can harness urban interest in agriculture and provide accurate information about the food system to an interested public.

Re-Connecting the Public with Agriculture

Botanical and public gardens, which are present in virtually every urban center and enjoy more than 70 million visitors per year, represent a tremendous opportunity for science-based education. These spaces represent a tremendous opportunity for science-based education and are well positioned to lead in bringing agriculture into urban centers. A recent article in *Nature Plants* (Miller et al., 2015) argues specifically that botanical gardens represent an already existing and massive infrastructure that is well positioned to play a leading role in bringing agriculture into urban centers. Many botanical gardens have the ability to perform plant research, offer formal and informal education, provide interpretation of plant uses, and showcase the beauty of plants. Furthermore, botanical gardens are experts at presenting scientifically based information as exciting narratives in places of stunning beauty.

With this possibility in mind, the U.S. Botanic Garden has joined with the ASA, CSSA, and SSSA to further engage urban populations on agriculture. In July of 2014, a group of more than 30 scientists and educators from a number of Societies met in Washington, DC, with botanical garden leaders from a number of prominent gardens to begin charting a course forward. This meeting informed the current U.S. Botanic Garden exhibit *Exposed: The Secret Life of Roots*, which presents plants of the American tallgrass prairie, including associated agronomic species. More than 700,000 people will view this exhibit before October, providing an important opportunity to experience the agricultural ecosystem that support a large portion of our agriculture. Furthermore, the U.S. Botanic Garden and Societies continue to work together to harness this momentum to further engage urban populations on agriculture, with botanical gardens, including the New York Botanical Garden, Chicago Botanic Garden, Missouri Botanical...