



## BRIT<sup>®</sup> OVERVIEW

The Botanical Research Institute of Texas (BRIT) is a non-profit international research and education center that studies plants and teaches about their importance to the world. The institute provides a forum to convene conversations about critical environmental issues, highlighting the interconnected nexus elements of soil, water, plants, food, and energy. BRIT seeks to forge collaborations between policy-makers, community members, business leaders, political representatives, educators, and scientists to find solutions for a changing environment.

BRIT sends scientists around the globe to investigate habitats, find rare and endangered plant species, and understand interactions between humans and the environment. Scientific inquiries also take place in BRIT's own backyard with researchers using the BRIT headquarters as a living laboratory for the study of North Texas ecology.

BRIT strives to inspire stewardship of the earth's limited resources within the local and global community. The institute's headquarters incorporates innovative energy- and water-conservation measures such as a living roof, solar panels, recycled building materials, and rain gardens. The US Green Building Council recognized the building's sustainability with its most rigorous certification level, LEED Platinum.

The building also serves as a resource for the families, teachers, and students engaged in BRIT's multi-generational education programs. Students from preschool through high school participate in hands-on experiments that spark a life-long love of the natural world and encourage careers in e-STEM (environmental-based science, technology, engineering, and math) fields. Meanwhile, gardeners, plant enthusiasts, and community members flock to BRIT for classes, workshops, events, and the popular summer Farmer's Market. BRIT programs lead the entire community to a greater understanding and appreciation of the value plants bring to life.

Founded in 1987 and based in Fort Worth, Texas, BRIT is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit institution funded by generous individuals, foundations, and corporations.

## BRIT's Mission

To conserve our natural heritage by deepening our knowledge of the plant world and achieving public awareness of the value plants bring to life.

## BRIT's Goals and Strategies

1. To **convene conversations** around the BRIT Nexus in an effort to influence both individual decisions and local and global environmental policy.
2. To **inspire stewardship** by engaging BRIT staff and constituents in understanding the plant diversity of Texas—particularly in areas where humans are changing the environment and impacting plant populations.
3. To **find sustainable solutions** for a changing environment by creating, testing, and deploying new tools that can help people identify plants, know how and why to use native plants in urban and rural landscapes, and empower decision-makers with established and agreed-upon information.
4. To **train future scientists** through development of hands-on science education programs.
5. To **forge collaborations** with community stakeholders to achieve common goals.

## Programs

**Research** – BRIT's research program is designed around two primary goals: directly improving life by making individuals better citizens through an increased understanding of the world and producing the highest quality peer-reviewed published research. Research is typically funded by competitive grants from the US National Science Foundation, private foundations, and private donations.

**Education** – BRIT is a recognized leader in botanical and environmental education, offering hands-on learning for students from preschool through adults. Young children are introduced to the wonders of the environment with Bella Begonia, a cheerful flower-faced puppet, in story-time sessions. Older kids get their hands dirty doing real science in BRIT's field trip program and at summer camps. Low-income, at-risk middle and high school students learn both science and leadership skills through BRIT's Green Revolution program, and area educators share ideas, curriculum resources, and peer support through the Teacher Tuesdays program.

**Herbarium** - At the heart of BRIT's headquarters is the Herbarium, a collection of more than one million dried plant specimens representing much of Earth's plant diversity. It's one of the largest plant collections in the United States and the largest U.S. herbarium not part of a university, botanical garden, or broader natural history museum. Some specimens date back to the late 1700s. BRIT's herbarium originated in the Lloyd Shinnery Collection in Systematic Botany from Southern Methodist University (SMU). BRIT also houses significant collections from Vanderbilt University, Dartmouth College and Houston Museum of Natural Science.

**Press** – BRIT's Press publishes botanical books, including the Illustrated Texas floras series, as well as a biannual and scholarly periodical, *Journal of the Botanical Research Institute of Texas*. As of December 2014, 44 books and 109 journal issues--more than 36,815 pages--have been published through BRIT Press.

**Library** - BRIT also maintains a library housing more than 125,000 volumes of books and journals from more than 100 countries. The oldest book in the Library is a 1549 edition of Dioscorides' De Materia Medica, a medical encyclopedia written by a Greek physician in the first century A.D. BRIT's collections serve as a resource for research scientists, students, teachers, plant enthusiasts, gardeners, and many others.

### BRIT Awards

BRIT's awards program honors individuals and organizations whose contributions and leadership best reflect BRIT's core principles of conservation, sustainability, and wise stewardship of the land.

**The International Award of Excellence in Conservation®** honors individuals and organizations for their outstanding contributions and leadership in conservation. The award was established in 1995 and is presented every year during BRIT's Annual Event. Recipients have included scientists, a head of state, philanthropists, Pulitzer Prize winners, government leaders, and other notables. A few recognizable names are Dr. Thomas E. Lovejoy, Dr. E. O. Wilson, the Honorable José María Figueres, Mrs. Lyndon Baines (Lady Bird) Johnson, Ted Turner, Sir Ghilleen Tolmie Prance, and Dr. Jane Goodall. For 2016, the award was presented to Carter Smith, executive director of Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.

**International Award of Excellence in Sustainable Winegrowing** was established in 2010 and honors wineries that are taking a leading role in implementing sustainable practices. It is the only international award of its kind. The award recognizes innovative sustainable practices in the categories of air, water, and land in both winegrowing and winemaking; social responsibility

practices; and wine taste. Application criteria are applicable across diverse regions and countries throughout the world.

The 2016 award was presented to Les Vignerons de Buzet of Buzet-sur-Baïse, France, based on the winery's on-going programs that address the three elements of sustainability - environment, economic, and social -- as well as wine taste.

Past winners include: LangeTwins Family Winery and Vineyards (2014), Yalumba (2013), Trefethen Family Wines (2012), Parducci Wine Cellars (2011), and Hall Wines received the inaugural award in 2010.

### Annual Operating Budget

The Botanical Research Institute of Texas' budget for the 2016 fiscal year was \$4.1 million, of which only 9 percent was administrative expenses. Ninety percent of our funds are from private resources, such as grant awards, events, and private donations. The remaining 10 percent comes from contracts for services, publication sales, and miscellaneous sources.

### Leadership

President, Executive Director – Dr. Ed Schneider  
Senior Vice President, Director of Education – Patricia Harrison  
Vice President of Finance & Operations – Elizabeth Edwards  
Vice President, Director of Development – Cleve Lancaster  
Vice President, Director of Research – Dr. Peter Fritsch

### Headquarters

1700 University Dr.  
Fort Worth, Texas 76107  
817-332-4441

### Direct Media Inquiries To:

Chris Chilton  
817-546-8691  
[cchilton@brit.org](mailto:cchilton@brit.org)