



Botanica at the Newtown Creek Nature Walk: Instructions and Information

What is Botanica?

- Botanica is an educational multiplayer Augmented Reality game built with the Newtown Creek Alliance for the NYC Department of Environmental Protection's Nature Walk that lets you and your friends build a garden together.
- The multiplayer experience is made possible by Snapchat and their application, Lens Studio. Players play through their Snapchat accounts, joining the game by selecting the 'Botanica' lens. Up to five people can play at a time, with one person hosting each game session. Each player appears as a bee avatar.
- The goal of 'Botanica' is to build a garden with your friends and through the process, learn about the wildflowers native to the region (and beyond). Each player can grow five flowers, with each flower randomly selected from different flower families depending on the color of the flowerbed. For example, when you place the yellow hexagon, you will be planting one out of five possible flowers from the Daisy Family. Because of this, you and your friends can grow completely unique gardens every game.
- 'Botanica' provides a fun and engaging way for people to learn about their surroundings. After you play, you're more likely to be able to identify the flowers as you walk down the nature walk and even give your friends a few tips on how to grow them.

How do I play Botanica?

- When you arrive at the Newtown Creek Nature Walk, look for the yellow signs at the entrances.
- Open Snapchat on your phone or handheld device. (If you don't have Snapchat you can download it from the App or Google Play stores.)
- Point your phone toward the square on the sign.
- Tap and Hold on the poster's yellow square in the camera.
- Start to play the FREE game by selecting a hexagonal flower bed from the menu and place it in your physical environment, to grow a flower. You water the flower by tapping on the flowerbed. It takes 10 taps to fully grow the flower. Upon completion, the flower's fact card is revealed, showing its name and a few tips on how to grow and care for that particular flower. In addition, you get a 'star' point. The garden is complete when the goal collective star count is reached.

What is the Nature Walk and how did it come to be?

- The Newtown Creek Nature Walk is a half-mile walk along the waterfront of Newtown Creek and Whale Creek in Greenpoint, Brooklyn.
- It sits adjacent to DEP's Newtown Creek Wastewater Resource Recovery Facility, which is the largest of NYC's 14 treatment facilities.
- Designed by environmental sculpture artist George Trakas and constructed through the City's Percent for Art Program (in conjunction with DEP's facility upgrade).

How does the Newtown Creek Nature Walk impact the community?

- Since 2007, the Nature Walk has provided safe public access and an educational experience along a revived industrial waterfront that was previously inaccessible.
- The Nature Walk delves deeply into the history of the creek and the surrounding Greenpoint neighborhood, exploring the importance of water to life on Earth. It celebrates the waterway, showcasing the intersection of nature and industry against the backdrop of the City's largest wastewater resource recovery facility, where DEP works to safeguard the environment.
- Open to the public daily from sunrise to sunset (weather permitting), it's a place to explore and learn, or simply walk and find quiet amongst nature.

How has AR impacted the experience?

- Using AR along the Nature Walk adds another layer of fun for visitors exploring this unique space, where diverse plant life thrives along our waterways.
- By exploring the Nature Walk's design features and AR together, visitors can learn more about the landscape and identify native trees, plants, wildflowers and boulders that re-imagine this open space as a vibrant intersection of history, culture, and geology.

What kinds of programs happen at the Nature Walk?

- DEP hosts guided tours for elementary through college age students and adults visiting the Nature Walk and the nearby Visitor Center at Newtown Creek.
- We've collaborated with the designer, George Trakas, to develop an educational brochure highlighting the design features, a fun scavenger hunt booklet, and a virtual tour for visitors to explore the space in different ways.

Why is the DEP involved in this project?

- DEP manages this unique, open space, and this was a special opportunity to further our commitment to community engagement and education. We are always looking for ways to further educate New Yorkers on our waterways and the importance of the wastewater treatment system and stewardship for protecting harbor water quality.

Why is the DEP excited about this Public Private partnership?

- As a city agency, we're always looking to do more to connect New Yorkers to their environment, so we welcome the opportunity to work with Augmented Reality and Snapchat. Public private partnerships like this mean we can continue to move our mission further and do so faster.

What is the value of Botanica to this space and NYC?

- It's great to have another reason for New Yorkers to visit this space, which is a hidden gem along the waterfront. By developing Botanica for the Nature Walk, Snapchat has created another layer of engagement, allowing visitors to use technology to identify and explore local flora planted along the creek.

Who do we hope will enjoy Botanica?

- We hope Botanica will be enjoyed by everyone, especially young New Yorkers because of their existing relationship with Snap. With signs displayed at the entrances, we hope it will spark curiosity for all visitors to check out!

How can AR impact environmental awareness and education in the future?

- AR can be a powerful tool for connecting New Yorkers of all ages to their surrounding environment by enhancing environmental topics with fun and interactive learning methods.
- It can go hand in hand with environmental education when helping people explore new places or see familiar spaces in a new way.
- AR can be a fun and interactive way to foster awareness and appreciation for the natural environment right here in our own community, especially for young people. What better way to help spread awareness than through the technology we already hold in our hands.