

Public Garden

THE JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN PUBLIC GARDENS ASSOCIATION

VOL 30, NO 3 • 2015

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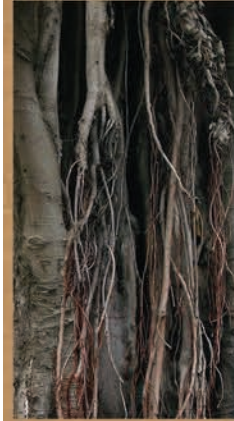
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In the next issue, learn how professors, students, and visitors at Saint Michael's College in Vermont use the words on rocks like these to compose messages, poems, and more.

PHOTO CREDIT: BRIAN MACDONALD

CORRECTIONS FOR THE LAST ISSUE:

Page 10 – The submitter of “Our Talking Trees” Michael Marcotrigiano is director and professor at The Botanic Garden at Smith College.

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Director's Note

Greetings!



The American Public Gardens Association officially turned 75 this past September. We not only celebrated, but we created a bold strategic plan for the next five years. Its five goals are all driven toward your experience as a member.

Member Value and Engagement—Programs, technology, and member tools that exceed your expectations

Professional Development—A roadmap to leadership at all levels, accessible to broad audiences so public horticulture is a prime career choice

Leadership and Advocacy—Elevate and advance the unified voice of the American Public Gardens Association on behalf of our industry and provide platforms to address important issues

Awareness—Increase awareness of the American Public Gardens Association, strengthen its brand, and articulate our gardens' value to their communities

Organizational Excellence—Ensure that our own organization pursues, achieves, and sustains excellence

Every strategic plan is a roadmap, a journey. Our first leg of the journey (2015) was ambitious—focused on deliverables aimed squarely at how you experience and interact with the American Public Gardens Association and the other 8,300+ members like you. As we head into the close of this first year, we are proud to have:

- Upgraded our member database and discussion groups; it now is easier than ever before to make connections and stay in touch with other members like you (went live June 2015);
- Released a groundbreaking, interactive tool that all gardens can use to benchmark themselves against their peers, get answers to the important comparisons you want, and have seriously powerful data available with click-and-go reports (Comparisons and Reports, live September 2015);
- Completely redesigned our website; streamlining your points of connection and interests to public gardens (new website to be launched in late November 2015).

BUT...

What are these outstanding deliverables with no identity? What separates *noted*, from *NOTEWORTHY*?

Over the next few months, American Public Gardens Association will bring forward our new revitalized brand. The same core elements that we have delivered since the Association was founded as American Association of Botanical Gardens and Arboreta seventy-five years ago are retained, and our new brand provides us with a cohesive voice and fresh outlook to take on the challenges faced by gardens today.

We will never stop offering services that connect, protect, and celebrate our gardens and the people who work in our industry. If you haven't checked out the latest changes described above, you are missing out. Today, gardens are more indispensable than ever. Rest assured that—at seventy-five years young—the American Public Gardens Association is just getting started!

Yours,

D. Casey Sclar

Executive Director

American Public Gardens Association

Cover: Gary Smith created four installations, *Nests for Lotusland*, as part of the larger exhibit, *Flock: Birds on the Brink*. Pictured here is *Dracaena*.

PHOTO CREDIT: GANNA WALSKA LOTUSLAND

IT STARTS WITH A SEED!

PEGGY OLWELL AND SARA OLDFIELD

Posessing the knowledge and skills that are vitally important at a time of rapid environmental change, botanic gardens in the United States play a major role in supporting the conservation of native plant diversity. One area in which these skills are urgently needed is in the production of native plant seed for the restoration of degraded landscapes. Nationally, commercial seed production does not always meet the demand for a diverse mix of native species. In response to this, a broad consortium of Federal and non-Federal partners recently launched an ambitious National Seed Strategy whose mission it is to ensure the availability of genetically appropriate seed reserves in order to restore viable and productive plant communities and sustainable ecosystems.

US Federal agencies have been supporting the development of native plant materials for over a decade. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM), working with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service, established the Native Plant Materials Development Program in 2001 to increase the availability of native plant materials. Botanic gardens have helped to deliver the program, particularly through Seeds of Success (SOS) which, since 2001, has collected seed from over five thousand taxa in twenty-nine states (Haidet and Olwell 2015). Key partners include Chicago Botanic Garden, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, North Carolina Botanical Garden, New England Wild Flower Society, and the Zoological Society of San Diego. In total, twenty-three botanic gardens have been involved. The Center for Plant Conservation has assisted with seed collection, database development, research on seed germination and



A seed collector with the Arboretum at Flagstaff collects swamp carex (*Carex senta*) for the Bureau of Land Management in Arizona.

PHOTO CREDIT: ARBORETUM AT FLAGSTAFF FOR THE BLM

storage, common garden studies, and genetic analyses of various species. The Plant Conservation Alliance brings together in a unique national partnership all the diverse organizations involved in seed collection and plant conservation more broadly.

Collecting seed from wild populations of native species, the first stage in developing a reliable commercial source, can take an average of ten to twenty years per species. Other components of the Native Plant Materials Development Program have included increasing seed production by private growers with seed of 122 native species becoming commercially available and seed of nearly two hundred additional species in development.

Germination and propagation protocols have been developed for over three thousand native species. Federal seed storage capacity has increased significantly through the development of USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service Plant Material Centers.

While progress in developing native plant materials has been impressive, it is failing to keep pace with increasing restoration needs. In the Western states, fewer than two thousand of the roughly 14,600 native plant taxa are currently available for restoration from any commercial source (White, Fant, and Kramer 2015). Even so-called "workhorse species" that have wide application in land restoration are not yet available in sufficient quantity (see Box).

WORKHORSE SPECIES: ESSENTIAL PLANTS FOR RESTORATION

Workhorse species are locally adapted native plants that have broad ecological amplitude and are abundant and generally easy to propagate. They help to define the landscape and provide a sense of place. It is important to identify these important and generally common plants for each region as they can perform well in degraded sites and potentially facilitate succession to diverse native plant communities.

An important action of the National Seed Strategy will be to assess and implement alternative seed production methods for workhorse shrub and forb species to augment seed collection from the wild. Botanic gardens are in a strong position to provide support.



A seed collector with Red Butte Garden equipped for the field

PHOTO CREDIT: RED BUTTE GARDEN FOR THE BLM



Red Butte Garden staff collecting seed from boxelder (*Acer negundo*) for the Bureau of Land Management in Utah

PHOTO CREDIT: RED BUTTE GARDEN FOR THE BLM



A Chicago Botanic Garden Conservation and Land Management intern collects southern goldenbush (*Isocoma pluriflora*) growing in gypsum soils in the Alkali Lakes Area of Critical Environmental Concern in south-central New Mexico

PHOTO CREDIT: MIKE HOWARD, THE BLM NEW MEXICO

Building on their involvement in SOS, botanic gardens have an important role to play in delivering the newly developed National Seed Strategy. Collectively they grow a wide range of native plants including 39 percent of US rare and threatened plant species. This provides a very important store of plant materials and the associated knowledge for conservation and restoration. Botanic gardens are hubs for essential botanical, ecological and horticultural skills, and opportunities for public outreach. All will be important to achieve the four inter-related goals of the National Seed Strategy. These are:

Goal 1: Identify seed needs and ensure the reliable availability of genetically appropriate seed reserves.

Goal 2: Identify research needs and conduct research to provide genetically appropriate seed reserves and to improve technology for seed production and ecological restoration.

Goal 3: Develop tools that enable managers to make timely, informed seeding decisions for ecological restoration.

Goal 4: Develop strategies for internal and external communication.

The launch of the National Seed Strategy, following extensive consultation, promises great hope for native landscapes and local biodiversity. For the first time all Federal Agencies will work together with a wide range of other partners to

facilitate the use of native plant diversity in the restoration of degraded ecosystems. These Agencies collectively have responsibility for managing nearly 30 percent of US land. Partnerships will be essential to guarantee success. The need to cherish native plants is well recognized by the botanic garden community—now is the time to realize national ambitions for restored, plant-rich, healthy ecosystems that can be enjoyed by all.

Sara Oldfield is an independent botanical consultant currently working on a range of plant conservation projects. She may be reached at sara@saraoldfield.net.

Peggy Olwell is the BLM's plant conservation program lead and chairs the Plant Conservation Alliance Federal Committee. She may be reached at polwell@blm.gov.



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Orange bush monkeyflower (*Diplacus aurantiacus* ssp. *aurantiacus*) collected by the Zoological Society of San Diego in California for the Bureau of Land Management's Seeds of Success program

PHOTO CREDIT: ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF SAN DIEGO FOR THE BLM



• Nasami Farm Nursery grows locally sourced wildflower seeds for the society's Community Supported Agriculture program.

PHOTO CREDIT: NEW ENGLAND WILD FLOWER SOCIETY

A Native Plant COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE PROGRAM

MARK RICHARDSON



It's easy to sell lady's-slippers. Despite the often hefty asking price, our garden centers cannot stock enough of them, and at the New England Wild Flower Society, we often sell out before a single bloom opens on the retail tables. Conversely, it's a lot harder to sell Virginia meadow-beauty (*Rhexia virginica*). Although it's priced to sell and can be a showstopper that does well in challenging sites in New England, it blooms at exactly the wrong time of the year. The challenge of introducing the public to more unusual native plants like this was precisely the reason we started our Native Plant Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program in 2013.

Modeled after popular cut flower CSA programs, our Native Plant CSA program offers patrons the opportunity to purchase a share early in the season, and return on four pre-determined pick-up dates to collect a quarter of their share at a time. This model encourages them to return to the garden center several times throughout the growing season and initially was a way to introduce gardeners to the more unusual edible native plants in our landscapes. Many of our guests understand that highbush blueberries are native and can be found growing wild in

our area, but most people are unfamiliar with wild ramps, may-apple, and even huckleberry. By packaging a collection of plants within a designated theme like edibles, and enticing consumers with the prospect of a "mystery bag" of unknown plants, we've been able to generate interest in unusual species and continuously reduce our inventory throughout the growing season.

We also use the CSA program as a way to provide consumers with a pre-selected array of plants with similar cultural needs. For example, this past season, we offered a "Woodland Native" share that featured plants that would thrive in the dry shade of a woodland canopy. We also provide customers the opportunity to customize their selections based on their specific site conditions or to choose a higher or lower number of a particular plant species at pick-up time.

We discovered that the CSA model does not work for everything. Spring ephemerals, for example, have such a short bloom season in New England, it's rather hard to give people a tray full of dormant plants with the promise that they're all alive. For this reason, we offer New England Native Plant Collections as an alternative. Collections are much

smaller (eight plants instead of as many as thirty-two plants in a CSA share), but are chosen for a specific attribute. This past season, for example, we offered six collections ranging from "Pollinator's Feast" to "Just Ferns!" The intent is the same with our Native Plant Collections—to introduce people to some unusual plant species with which they might not be familiar and help broaden the reach of our mission to promote the region's native plants.

We have had great response to the program. It's a unique option for the native plant enthusiast who is interested in trying out some new plants, but much like the agricultural models that inspired it, our program is certainly not for everyone. The most important advice for a garden interested in creating its own CSA program is to keep it simple, but offer some flexibility to the consumer. For more information about the Native Plant CSA program, visit our website at newenglandwild.org or contact our retail manager, Noni Macon, at nmacon@newenglandwild.org.

Mark Richardson is the director of horticulture at the New England Wild Flower Society.



The intent is the same with our Native Plant Collections—to introduce people to some unusual plant species with which they might not be familiar and help broaden the reach of our mission to promote the region's native plants.

Customers select plants to fill their order.

PHOTO CREDIT: NEW ENGLAND WILD FLOWER SOCIETY



Wild ramps (*Allium tricoccum*) are one of the many edibles we offer.

PHOTO CREDIT: DAN JAFFE



Some of the many native plants offered through our Community Supported Agriculture program.

PHOTO CREDIT: NEW ENGLAND WILD FLOWER SOCIETY

BAMBOOS

AT SAN DIEGO BOTANIC GARDEN

PAUL REDEKER

Bamboo is well loved for the serene environment it can create, but there's much more to this unique plant group than its beauty. Bamboo is one of the fastest growing plants in the world, growing up to a foot a day, and can reach maturity in just thirty days! Bamboo belongs to the grass family Poaceae, so it is not surprising that most species perform best with plenty of water; a rich, loamy soil; warm, sunny weather; and nitrogen-rich fertilizers. It's kind of fun to think about removing the dead culms (stems or stalks) as if you were de-thatching a giant's lawn. San Diego Botanic Garden, located in Southern California where summers are warm and winters are mild, has a perfect climate for growing bamboo. The Pacific Ocean is visible from the entrance to our Bamboo Garden!

The life cycle and flowering habits of bamboo are interesting. The plants will grow for thirty to eighty years or more, set a large number of seed, and die. Some species will experience "gregarious flowering"; like species all over the world flower simultaneously and complete their lifecycle regardless of their location. It is not known what triggers this flowering phenomenon.

A wonderful opportunity that has evolved out of our having such a diverse bamboo collection is that we're able to help feed the giant pandas at neighboring San Diego Zoo. It's pretty cool to visit the pandas and see them eating food provided right out of our Garden! The pandas eat several bamboo varieties grown on our property, including Beechey Bamboo (*Bambusa beecheyana*) and Vivax Bamboo (*Phyllostachys vivax*). The Zoo's nutritionist also approves of Golden Bamboo or Buddha's Belly Bamboo (*B. vulgaris*), Alphonse Karr Bamboo (*B. multiplex* 'Alphonse Karr'), and Waya Bamboo (*Dendrocalamus membranaceus*).

We host more bamboo species in other parts of our thirty-seven-acre property, including the Tropical Rainforest where no other plant shares the same graceful form and texture. Their value to our environment is substantial—they release more oxygen and take up more carbon dioxide than an equivalent-sized stand of trees!

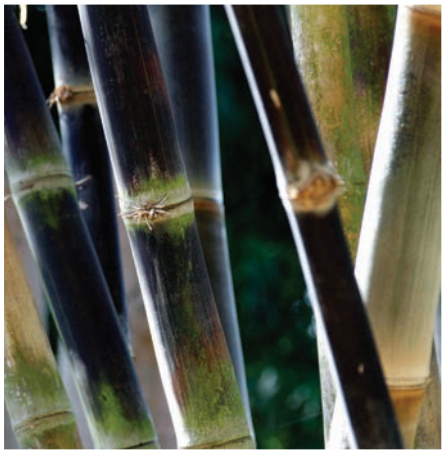
A special note of appreciation goes out to the volunteers and docents who put in countless hours working with us to improve and enhance each area of the grounds and make our garden beautiful.

Paul Redeker is the director of horticulture at San Diego Botanic Garden. He may be reached at predeker@sdbgarden.org.

Strolling through our bamboo forest in the Bamboo Garden, enjoying the cool, fresh air and the relaxing sound of leaves blowing in the wind, is one of my favorite things to do.



We have almost two hundred individual plants in our bamboo collection, including over one hundred twenty taxa. Our tranquil two-and-a-fifth-acre Bamboo Garden showcases the largest public collection of bamboo in the nation! The following are several of our favorites:



Black Asper Bamboo, *Dendrocalamus asper* 'Betung Hitam': One of our volunteers' favorite bamboo is the Black Asper. This clumping species from Southeast Asia is the largest of the black bamboos, reaching a height of one hundred feet. Standing next to the base of this impressive specimen, which tops out at about forty-five feet here at our garden, it would be a shame not to have a camera to capture the contrasting green-colored base of the four-inch culms in the background. Not a bad spot to take a selfie!



Painted Bamboo, *Bambusa vulgaris* 'Vittata': The name fits this bamboo perfectly. If you painted shamrock green streaks onto this bright-golden-yellow-stemmed bamboo, you would recreate the look of this beautiful bamboo that evolved naturally this way! This Indochina native, whose arching culms can reach fifty-feet tall, is now cultivated throughout the world for use as an ornamental. It is an open-clump type of bamboo that is just as stunning to see in person as it is to see in any photo!



Giant Timber Bamboo, *Dendrocalamus giganteus*: Just a couple of years ago, our Giant Timber Bamboo, the largest bamboo in our collection, decided to set seed, ending its lifecycle. To commemorate the large specimen, the six- to eight-inch culms were left as an art piece and are still available for the public to admire today. Also called Dragon Bamboo, this Southeast Asian species can grow over one hundred feet tall under favorable tropical/subtropical conditions.



Mexican Weeping Bamboo, *Oatea acuminata aztecorum*: This variety of bamboo develops into a fine-textured, clumping specimen that has beautifully arching branches. It almost has the appearance of a fountain spray of water, shooting upward from the middle and cascading outward until it freezes in mid-air before touching the ground. Sometimes the wind catches it just right and moves the thin culms back and forth, giving it life and a very relaxing element to enjoy. It grows to about twelve to fifteen feet tall and wide, but is easily pruned if a smaller size is preferred, making it a great choice as a landscape plant for the home owner. It's also a great container plant for a back patio with some afternoon shade or filtered sunlight.

PHOTO CREDIT: PAUL REDEKER



Chinese Timber Bamboo, *Phyllostachys vivax*: If walking through a forest sounds like your way of getting away from it all, our stand of Vivax Bamboo might just be for you! In the lower portion of our Bamboo Garden, our largest single bamboo specimen is showcased—the Chinese Timber Bamboo. It reaches a height of about forty-five feet and shades a curving pathway right through the middle of the stand of many culms. This bamboo is a true runner. The underground stems, or rhizomes, can travel underground and emerge inches or yards away from the original stand. Once this bamboo, or any running bamboo, gets away, it can be difficult to predict where it will roam. In most cases a twenty-four-inch-deep polyethylene barrier will retain both the runners and the good relationship you have with your neighbor.



Many of our guests and volunteers enjoy visiting and working under the shaded thickets of culms, finding this location a place to relax and balance the mind, body, and soul. One of the ways we find our Zen in this urban oasis is by spending a special moment beside our pond filled with red-eared slider turtles, bullfrogs, mosquito fish, and platies and listening to the soothing refrains of water as it trickles down the rock fountain.

ALL PHOTO CREDITS: RACHEL COBB, EXCEPT AS NOTED

By **TRULY** Welcoming Guests



Guest service team members are always available to answer questions and help guests to better enjoy their visit.

ALL PHOTO CREDITS: LONGWOOD GARDENS

In 2012, Longwood Gardens launched its Guest Experience Academy—an intensive training program designed to help its staff better engage with visitors and provide the steps of service that lead to an extraordinary guest experience. To date, more than four hundred Longwood staff have completed the two-day training. The result? Ninety-eight percent of guests to Longwood would recommend the Gardens to a friend.

In 2013, Longwood began offering the Academy to colleagues from other

gardens and cultural institutions. To date, representatives from forty-two public gardens and museums have taken the training. “I thought the program was fantastic and a great model for others to take home and implement in their own gardens. But, most important, seeing this program in action with your employees was a real eye-opener,” enthused one participant. “This was a very motivating experience, and the framework and knowledge shared will give us the ability to take this from a wish to a reality,” shared another attendee.

This open letter to our guests gives insight into our guest service mindset and what it takes to create a truly extraordinary experience.

Renee DePietro is guest admissions operations manager at Longwood Gardens.

Longwood Gardens will be offering its Guest Experience Academy again in spring 2016. To learn more, please email Guest Experience Manager Chuck Ross at cross@longwoodgardens.org.





Dear Guest:

We only have one chance to make a great first impression. That is why you are at the center of everything we do. You are the reason we create exquisite floral displays, the reason we strive for world-class performing arts, the reason we educate the next generation of horticulturists, the reason we plan the next showstopper exhibit, and the reason we constantly aim for excellence.

While you are planning your visit, we are anticipating your arrival. Our website is designed to provide you with a wealth of information at your fingertips. The friendly voice in our concierge-style call center will answer your questions and put your mind at ease. A pre-arrival email will help you make the most of your visit. When you do arrive, our volunteer Garden Ambassador will greet you with a smile and orient you to our Gardens' many offerings. If it looks like rain, we will offer you an umbrella. As you enter the Gardens, we will suggest a route that highlights areas in bloom. Our horticulture team will engage and share their plant knowledge with you. As you make your way back through the Visitor Center, we will ask you about your visit, thank you for coming, and invite you to make our world yours by becoming a Member. After your visit, we will reach out to ask for your feedback, because it is important to know where we excelled, or missed the mark.

There is a great feeling of satisfaction when we see that pleasantly surprised look on your face when we hold a door open or offer to take a photo for you. We see the relief on your face when we approach you with directions as you stand with the map. We watch as your eyes widen in wonder when you first enter our Conservatory. We overhear you when you say, "I haven't been able to wipe this smile off my face since we got here." It is in these moments that we realize we've exceeded your expectations.

Planning a visit? We look forward to welcoming you and delivering the steps of service that will make your Longwood experience extraordinary. The magic that happens to make each visit special is critical to building your loyalty. We want to welcome you back. We want you to tell your friends about your experience. We want you to become our Facebook fan, share an image on Instagram, become our advocate. We want you to become a part of our family, to become a Member.

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GARDEN PHOTOGRAPHY

SAXON HOLT

WORKSHOP DESIGN



Students at a “Focal Point” workshop learn to use garden shrubbery to frame the focal point of a scene.

ALL PHOTO CREDITS: SAXON HOLT

Most gardeners love to take pictures—and most need help. Getting a camera to capture what the eye sees is not as easy as getting a good camera. Indeed, smart phones will usually outperform a sophisticated digital single-lens reflex camera (DSLR) in the hands of a hurried photographer.

But as soon as that smartphone begins to feel inadequate and the garden photographer gets more serious about taking good photos with a “real” camera, he or she wants help. A workshop at the nearest public garden should be the first place to learn.

To run a successful program, start with a clear definition of a workshop and its audience. Then have a qualified instructor, classroom facilities with support from the staff, and a marketing plan to promote and fill the class.

At its most basic level, a workshop gives twelve to fifteen students an active learning experience taking pictures under the guidance of a professional photographer, followed by a classroom critique of the collective work. Lecture

classes, assignments, and discussion time are all features that build a workshop, but at the core, the students will expect special early admission to the garden and a critique.

The workshop audience is varied, and students generally fit into three categories. True beginners have just decided to get a serious camera and know little about it. Advanced beginners have realized their camera has great potential, but they need instruction on composition and technique. Advanced amateurs are usually looking for an opportunity to shoot in a special location, and relish working in a professional workshop.

Though not impossible, it is not easy to satisfy all types of students in one workshop, and I advise holding a



Distant and close views of a garden scene in a "Framing" workshop illustrate how to find elements in the garden that can carve out a photo.

workshop aimed toward beginners or experienced photographers. Your students will always be somewhat mismatched, but a clear definition of the workshop both helps the instructor prepare for success and the garden market it effectively.

An experienced group can arrive at the garden (early when the light is sweet), meet the instructor, and get to work quickly after a brief tour and an explanation of the workshop theme. I like to use a specific topic from *The PhotoBotanic Garden Photography Workshop* to give students an assignment to work with. This allows the critique time in the classroom to become a collective lesson on the theme that deepens the experience of each individual, and leads to great discussions. An afternoon session will begin after a lunch break back in the classroom for a presentation by the instructor, followed by a late afternoon shoot.

A beginner group is better served with an A/V presentation before they are turned loose in the garden. I will still use a theme, but the presentation will show examples and help students understand the camera as a creative tool. This workshop starts in the afternoon so that the photography session starts as the light begins to soften. The critique lasts into the evening.

The critique is vital to all workshops. It is where the real learning takes place. After the photography time the students gather in a classroom to download their work. They should all have their own laptop to review their work and choose two or three images to share. The instructor then gathers those files on a single flash drive so that he or she can project and discuss the photos.

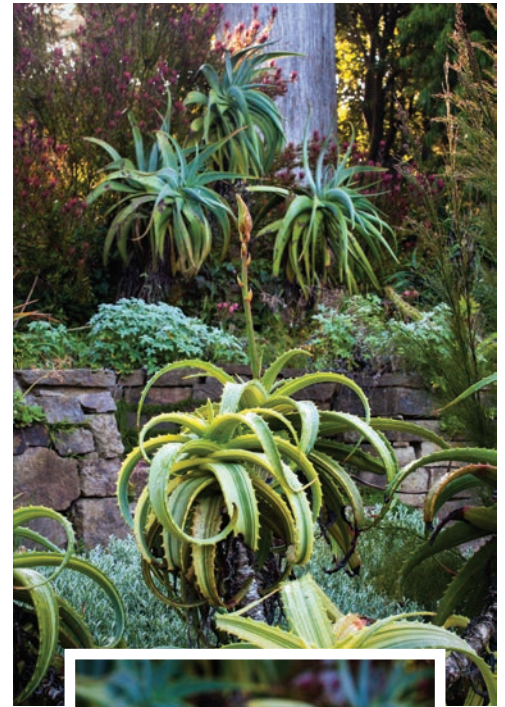
Creating a workshop for public garden programs often involves holding more than a single morning or afternoon class. Multiple classes or public lectures can be scheduled to take advantage of the photographer's time and the marketing energy needed to promote the event.

Garden photography workshops tend to be more expensive than other classes since the photographer is being contracted during the peak garden season and the classes are small. Some gardens offer programs as member services and cover some costs internally. Other programs are expected to return a profit.

No matter how big or small you design your program to be, expect most of the students to come from your existing community: members, garden clubs, and social media followers. The photographer may very well bring a few students, and your marketing to the larger area will bring some students to the garden, but take the pulse of your own community to judge enthusiasm (and attendance). The photographer will expect to be paid whether the workshop is full or not, though most photographers will have a cancellation clause or "kill fee" if early enrollment is low. Some photographers will work on a percentage of total proceeds.

A garden photography workshop is an exciting event and builds buzz about the garden. It really should be an ongoing program, held once or twice every year. A successful program will be a continual magnet for new photographers and a point of lifelong learning for more experienced ones.

Saxon Holt is a professional garden photographer based in northern California. He is the author of several books, including The PhotoBotanic Garden Photography Workshop and Think Like a Camera. He may be contacted at sholt@saxonholt.com.



In a "Fill the Frame" workshop, the goal is to successfully frame the focal point, without wasting space in the composition.







These Japanese iris (*Iris ensata*) at Quarryhill Botanical Garden are in the shade of a tree. Sunlight is shining in the distance across the garden. By using a telephoto lens to be sure of soft focus in the distance, and exposing the camera for the foreground iris, I created a composition that took advantage of the distant glow and interlocking color shapes. As a result, the distance appears light and airy. It beautifully illustrates that a camera sees differently than the human eye.

Submitted by Saxon Holt, garden photographer and author of Think Like a Camera

PHOTO CREDIT: SAXON HOLT

Your **GARDEN STORE** vs. **AMAZON:**

Seven Ways to Compete Successfully

JANICE YABLONSKI-HICKEY WITH ARTHUR M. MANASK

Retailers at public gardens with online stores often ask us: “How can we compete with Amazon?” Given Amazon’s continued dominance in the retail landscape, garden shops sometimes feel that they have few defenses in the battle over customers, but that is not necessarily the case. I have seen gardens and other public institutions resort to deep discounting and free shipping on popular mission-based merchandise in an effort to compete with the world’s largest online store. The result is just margin erosion and a loss of revenue on the very products gardens are most associated with—their horticultural treasures.

Amazon will always have three key advantages: the largest product offering, the best pricing, and fast, inexpensive shipping. However, gardens and cultural attractions have tools at their disposal as well. Here are some ways to focus your store on being “anti-Amazon,” and thus an alternative to the giant, impersonal retail behemoth, as the means to cultivate customers.

1. Be an aspirational brand.

The more you can engage customers in your mission, the more of a proactive buying choice you will become. Sales associates need to be proselytizers of the garden’s purpose and truly knowledgeable about what your organization does. People support organizations they have an emotional connection to, and they are willing to pay full price for goods, and expect to pay for shipping, at a mission-based store.

2. Have a narrow focus and be experts.

Keep your offering limited to items that are truly related to your core subject areas. Become known as a place where enthusiasts of the natural world can find highly relevant items. Display your niche expertise by developing extensive product copy and detailed specifications in your online store and by having product specialists and buyers speak in your shop and answer customer questions.

3. Create your own products.

To the degree that you are able, develop proprietary product. Being a destination with an exclusive offering, or one that is not widely available, will help attract and retain customers. It will also keep you from being part of the price competition surrounding commodity goods.

4. Offer a loyalty program.

Shopping rewards programs that offer points help develop and maintain long-term relationships with customers. Make sure that rewards can be redeemed both in-store and online for the greatest customer satisfaction.

5. Emphasize local themes.

Develop a sense of community by offering items about your area’s landscape or that are made in your region, especially by local gardeners and artisans using materials, styles, and techniques native to your area. Not only will you benefit from the artisans’ following, you will encourage a sense of place that helps make your store unique.



Common Lichens of Northeastern North America: A Field Guide, by Troy McMullin, a scientific journal published by The New York Botanical Garden Press that is sold on The New York Botanical Garden shop site

6. Have exceptional customer service.

Ensure that your store staff actively, passionately, and effectively helps customers as they shop and solves any problems after a sale is made. Make returns easy. Have customer-centric policies. When you make personal connections and go the extra mile, you turn average shoppers into brand evangelists.

7. Be known as a great source for gifts.

Offer a tasteful gift wrap program in your shop and online store so buyers feel confident that what they give from your garden is elegant and ready for the recipient. Include gift receipts for easy exchanges.

In being focused, and in developing your store experience into an important part of serving the garden’s horticultural and scientific purpose, you will create lasting customers and drive repeat business. Remember, thinking local and doing what Amazon cannot is the key to your competitive advantage.





The New York Botanical Garden's mission-centric and customer-friendly displays



The unique and elegant gift-wrap presentation available from The Shops at Mount Vernon Estate and Gardens

SPECIAL GUIDELINES FOR ORGANIZATIONS OUTSOURCING RETAIL TO THIRD-PARTY OPERATORS

Gardens using retail operators may have less flexibility in making some of the changes outlined above. If you are working with an operator, emphasize the following key points:

- Your shop must be highly related to your site and research areas and carry your scientists' publications in-store and online.
- For custom product, move beyond logo items and produce a guidebook or other items where educational descriptions can be featured.
- Product copy needs to be informative and mission-oriented. Curators and educational staff should be involved so there is an authenticity about your offering.



Bowls created by Phil Gautreau of Phil Gautreau Wood Design. Mr. Gautreau is a winner of a 2015 Eco-Choice Award for innovative use of locally sourced sustainable materials in design. He was nominated for a selection of hand-turned Yew Wood Bowls he created for the Brooklyn Botanic Garden (BBG). The wood for the bowls was taken from trees that were removed from the garden property. Odd in shape and unable to be milled, they were destined to become mulch until Mr. Gautreau was commissioned by BBG to create these one-of-a-kind, site-specific, special gift items.

PHOTO CREDIT: © FIORENZO BORGHI



Janice Yablonski-Hickey, the ecommerce principal at Manask & Associates, has fifteen years' experience in online stores and digital media. She specializes in website development and design projects, marketing programs, and advanced retail technology for not-for-profit organizations. You may contact her at janice@manask.com.



Arthur M. Manask is the founder and CEO of Manask & Associates, a consulting firm that has provided management advisory services for more than twenty years to cultural and other institutions that have gift shops, restaurants, and catering services. You may contact him at Artm@manask.com.

New Vision for **Ancient Trees:** *The Approach in Three European Gardens*

LAURIE METZGER

Ancient sentinels, aging giants, historic trees can tell the story of our nation.

But the preservation of these champions begs the question: Do management plans written specifically for aging trees exist? Furthermore, is there industry-wide consensus on nomenclature regarding old trees? And finally, how can institutions share their oldest specimens with the public while maintaining a safe environment?

A worldwide survey indicated that a look across the Atlantic Ocean to England and Germany—specifically the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, and The Royal Parks, both located within Greater London; and Bernrieder Park in Bavaria—could provide some answers. Each of these

institutions has at least twenty aging trees in their collections and currently utilizes an active management plan specific to older specimens. Parks, woodlands, and botanical gardens are represented.

The results of the study showed similarities among these institutions that can be broken down into the following six concepts:

Institutional Mission

Mission statements that speak directly to the preservation of the landscape, the trees, or both. This is significant for tree staff and for the trees, as it gives decision-making power to the staff and places trees and their preservation at a high priority, without need for discussion.

Nomenclature, Resources, and Communication

Relative agreement about the nomenclature surrounding old trees. The Ancient Tree Forum's publication, *Ancient and other Veteran Trees: Further Guidance on Management*, was mentioned as being a reference at all three institutions. This use of common nomenclature aids in avoiding misunderstandings, especially between countries.

Detailed Management Planning

Management plans that include a schedule for tree assessment and a schedule of work to be completed for all trees. These plans can be updated, but they cannot be reduced in any form. Management plans include language specific to tree and human safety,

Lapsed pollard, with meadow grass and some retrenchment pruning - The Royal Parks, London





Sculptural sweet chestnut at Greenwich Park, Greenwich, London

PHOTO CREDIT: LAURIE METZGER



Woodlands, Bernreider Park, Bavaria

PHOTO CREDIT: THORSTEN PETRAUSCH



Sculptural specimen at The Royal Parks, London

PHOTO CREDIT: LAURIE METZGER

especially regarding “active” areas, such as benches and paths. Signage at these institutions is a part of the management plan and is more informative than prohibitive.

Practical Methodology

Utilizing practical techniques specific to aging trees. These are numerous and include: soil aeration, special mulching, retrenchment pruning, bracing removal where possible, less mowing under the drip line, tomography, histograms, and the injection of beneficial mycorrhizal fungi and bacteria where appropriate.

Partnerships

Relationships with outside institutions. This allows for collaboration and partnerships. Kew, for example, allows each member of a woodcarving group to carve one piece of a fallen tree. Then the pieces are displayed together. In this way, the tree is “born again,” continuing to be a part of the collection. Bernreider Park reached out to an institution concerned with bio-diversity in order to create and install educational signage.

Redefining Beauty

An institutional shift in the presentation of what is “beautiful.” This change is significant because gardens are known as places of beauty and, therefore, have some authority on the subject. The case studies are from complex institutions with many priorities. But in the last twenty years, these institutions have gone to great lengths to preserve and present aging trees even when they have passed the point of fulfilling the traditional tree ascetic. In this way gardens are broadening the definition of “beauty.” To this end, varying preservation practices can be observed. For example, care has been taken to create or allow “meadow” areas to grow at each institution. In these areas very little mowing is done, and ecosystems are able to develop more naturally. The trees benefit from less compaction of the soil near their roots. This presentation is a departure from the more traditional, clipped, formal garden, but presents a broader vision of “beauty.”

Conclusion

These concepts reveal clear opportunities for institutions with historic and ancient trees. First, there exist underutilized resources that can be used to increase the knowledge base, allow for communication, and build relationships between institutions and countries. Beyond that, the historic or ancient tree collection can be a place for history and science education, aiding institutions in the raising of funds, especially in the form of educational grants. Ancient trees can be hosts for biodiversity, improving the environment and raising the value of the institution overall. Last, the collection can allow the garden to speak with authority in society’s discussion of beauty. Quite simply, the historic and ancient tree collection has the potential to become the cornerstone of its institution, connecting all the pieces together. The full exploration and implementation of these concepts can produce exponential results, one of the many of which is helping gardens to become an indispensable part of the human experience.

Laurie Metzger completed this research as a part of her master’s thesis, Historic Tree Collections Management: A New Vision for Old Trees, during her time as a Longwood Graduate Fellow. Laurie now resides in Bavaria, Germany, where she travels as often as she can around Europe and the US in her continued hunt for great tree specimens and innovative means of managing and preserving them. The thesis has been published as a book and can be purchased here: www.morebooks.de/store/gb/book/historic-tree-collections-management/isbn/978-3-659-71428-3



Resources

Ancient and Other Veteran Trees: Further Guidance on Management, Ancient Tree Forum, ed. David Lonsdale, 2013

Tony Kirkham and Kevin Martin, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew
t.kirkham@kew.org, k.martin@kew.org

Ian Rodgers, The Royal Parks, IRodger@royalparks.gsi.gov.uk

Karl-Otto Kullmann, Bernreider Park, kukoa@fonline.de (in German only)

Neville Fay (leading British tree expert)

http://www.treeworks.co.uk/press_releases_publications.php

Online Resources for Readers

Historic Tree Collections Management: A New Vision for Old Trees
udspace.udel.edu/bitstream/handle/19716/16703/2014_Metzger_Laurie_MS.pdf?sequence=1

www.ancienttreeforum.co.uk/

www.ancienttreeforum.co.uk/resources/ancient-trees-books-shop/

www.treeworks.co.uk/press_releases_publications.php

Dear Colleagues,

This page is for you to share a garden related thing that you love—a plant (old or new), a book, a tool, a website, and more—with the public garden community. We need a photo, a short (under fifty words) description of why you love it, and a website so others can get it, too. Send to PublicGardenMag@publicgardens.org.

Five or six submissions will be published in every issue. Please share yours!

Thank you,

Dorothea Coleman
Managing Editor, *Public Garden*

Bahco Lawn Edging Shears



We love it because it allows you to precisely edge garden beds, giving the garden a tidy and manicured appearance. You can purchase it from A.M. Leonard, www.amleo.com/bahco-long-handled-edging-shear-with-vertical-cutting-blades/p/P75/

Submitted by the Gardeners at Chanticleer, Chanticleer Garden in Wayne, Pennsylvania, www.chanticleergarden.org

Hori-Hori

This is A.M. Leonard's "update" of a traditional Japanese tool, the Hori-Hori. The Deluxe Soil Knife's stainless steel toughness and multiple uses in gardening, such as weeding, cutting roots, removing plants and splitting perennials, ripping sod, cutting twine, and dibbling in transplants, makes it an invaluable hand tool for me.

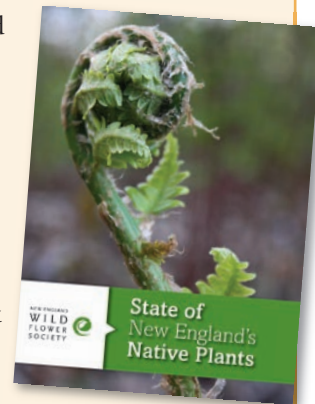
www.amleo.com/multi-purpose-hori-hori-knife/p/K634/

Submitted by Scott Canning, horticulture and special projects director, Santa Fe Botanical Garden



State of the Plants

This year New England Wild Flower Society released the *State of the Plants* report on the status of and threats to native plants and ecological communities in New England. It has been described as the most comprehensive assessment of New England plant communities ever assembled.



www.newenglandwild.org/conserve/state-of-the-plants

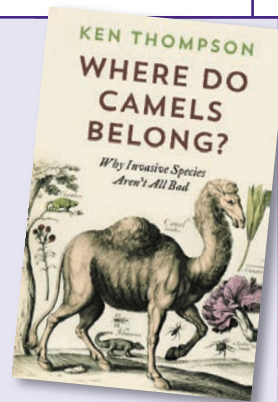
www.newenglandwild.org/conserve/state-of-the-plants-technical-report.pdf

Submitted by Sarah Beck, program manager, American Public Gardens Association

Where Do Camels Belong?

Where Do Camels Belong? Why Invasive Species Aren't All Bad
by Ken Thompson

This book challenges us to question the way we think about native and invasive species. Through the use of several examples, Ken Thompson illustrates how the concept of nativity cannot be reduced to simply "good vs. bad", but rather is a complex topic filled with nuance.



<http://www.amazon.com/Where-Do-Camels-Belong-invasive/dp/1781251746>

Submitted by George Coombs, Research Horticulturist, Mt. Cuba Center

Garden Professional SPOTLIGHT Gregg Tepper

*Director of Horticulture
Delaware Botanic Gardens at Pepper Creek*

Tell us about your journey in the garden industry.

It began in June 2005 when I became the Woods Path gardener at Mt. Cuba Center. I'll always remember those years as a joyful period—working with the plant collection, lecturing, teaching, maintaining the Woods Path. I knew that I was furthering Mrs. Lammot du Pont Copeland's vision to inspire and educate the public about the importance of native plants. I met some amazing people in horticulture: Fred Case, Bill Cullina, Larry Mellichamp, and gardeners from Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. It afforded me the opportunity to engage the community by conducting tours, offering lectures, and teaching classes. Every gardener knows that relocating is a necessary step for successful growth. After seven years, I left Mt. Cuba Center to pursue the next steps of my journey.

Tell us about a recent project you worked on.

I was invited to speak on “The Sensory Appeal of Native Plants” at Delaware Botanic Gardens at Pepper Creek, a new botanic garden. It had obtained non-profit status and had a small, working board, but no site for the gardens had been selected. Intrigued by the idea of a new garden being located on the coast of southern Delaware, I joined as a founding member. Soon I accepted an ex-officio membership on the board, and then became the director of horticulture.

In cooperation with the Sussex County Land Trust, Delaware Botanic Gardens signed a lease in 2014 for a thirty-seven-acre property in Sussex County, Delaware, which included a thousand feet of frontage along Pepper Creek, an estuary of the Indian River, and twelve acres of woodlands. It will feature plants that thrive in the coastal plain.

Many people have stepped forward to help us: a project engineering company and other local businesses donate services pro bono; an advisory council of many of our industry's leading professionals chaired by Delaware's First Lady; donors to several very successful fundraising events; and others. One very special offer came through APGA. Suzanne Moussa put us in contact with Don Rakow of Cornell University. Graduate students in Don's Public Garden Management course used Delaware Botanic Gardens as a project. These future leaders created a comprehensive Plant Collections Policy and researched the industry for the key elements of a successful Children's Garden. Each collaboration brings us closer to building a world-class coastal plain botanic garden on the Delmarva Peninsula.

What do you find to be the most rewarding thing about working in this industry?

What I've found most rewarding is the openness, the willingness to share experience and knowledge, to provide guidance and support, all with enthusiasm. I anticipate the time when we at Delaware Botanic Gardens at Pepper Creek will be able to pay it forward to the next newcomers in the field.

We anticipate opening on June 21, 2017, and look forward to showing those who have given so freely what they have helped us create. I feel very proud to be a part of this supportive community.

Nominated by Dr. Don Rakow, associate professor, School of Integrative Plant Science, Section of Horticulture, Cornell University



ALLIANCES: An Effective Marketing Tool for *Every Garden*

GERALD S. BURGNER

As cultural institutions, public gardens are a source for plant collections and botanical research, providing a great service to communities. With an increasing focus on conservation and sustainability, public gardens, especially smaller gardens, are motivated to expand their traditional roles and establish alliances with local partners to address food provision (community gardens), water conservation, community development, and more.

But how effective are alliances as a marketing strategy to meet organizational goals? Or do alliances create more headaches for each participating organization? A recent study conducted at North Carolina State University sought to answer these questions.

Alliances: The Good and the Bad

Researchers distributed an online survey to 140 large, medium, and small public gardens located throughout the United States. Questions were asked about marketing strategies used, attitudes toward alliances (collaborations and partnerships), and who was responsible for marketing efforts. As anticipated, the medium and large gardens were more likely to have designated marketing and public relations staff, but each garden had equal opportunity for marketing success regardless of size and age of the garden. Not surprisingly, having a marketing plan and a marketing budget were also major factors in the success of the marketing program, resulting in increased revenues and annual budgets.

The majority of public gardens had entered into previous alliances, and all public gardens would enter into an alliance again, even those that considered the alliance as unsuccessful. When asked about why alliances were developed, the top reasons given were to increase the garden's exposure and the number of memberships, and, of course, to generate more donations and revenues. Surprisingly, diversifying the audience, fulfilling the garden's mission, and being recognized as an environmental steward were considered less important when entering an alliance.

Unfortunately, alliances may have drawbacks for public gardens. Low return on the investment, time, and labor required to manage collaborations or



A collaboration with several green industry organizations for the Silent Auction at the Gala in the Garden, JC Raulston Arboretum, Raleigh, North Carolina

PHOTO CREDIT: DEBRA SINGER-HARTER

A collaboration with sponsors enables a successful Gala in the Garden at the JC Raulston Arboretum, Raleigh, North Carolina

PHOTO CREDIT: DEBRA SINGER-HARTER



Outreach as a collaborative effort. William Lefevre, executive director of Sarah P. Duke Gardens, explains the educational value of the Discovery Garden to students enrolled in Public Garden Administration at North Carolina State University.

PHOTO CREDIT: GERALD BURGNER



Plant sale collaboration between JC Raulston Arboretum and Pi Alpha Xi Honorary Society, North Carolina State University

PHOTO CREDIT: GERALD BURGNER

partnerships, no increase in attendance or supporters, limitations or difficulty in entering other organizational alliances, and confusion resulting from multi-organization marketing messages were the most common detractors from successful alliances. Interestingly, over one-fourth of the respondents stated that they saw no drawbacks, reinforcing the positive outlook that organizations have toward alliances.

Will You Be My Partner?

Public gardens typically aligned with other cultural institutions, garden and green industry organizations, and educational institutions. Often overlooked organizations that have great potential as partners for small public gardens are food groups, such as community gardens, state and local government agencies, and for-profit companies. Community gardens had higher rates of success when aligned with another organization, which would be a great opportunity for small gardens in the promotion of edible landscapes.

Making an Alliance Work

Public gardens can follow some simple, yet logical, guidelines to develop successful alliances. First, consider why the garden wants to enter an arrangement. Does each organization have similar goals and missions? If each organization has similar viewpoints toward an important issue or problem, each one will work diligently to achieve success and accomplish goals and objectives.

The next step is the most important: develop a written plan or agreement which establishes a document for governing the alliance, addresses how issues are to be handled, and establishes accountability and transparency. Cultivating a high level of trust between organizations and creating a sense of belonging develops a greater sense of ownership to the alliance. When public gardens and the partnering organizations feel that they are important to the relationship, the alliance has a higher rate of success. Each partner will tend to be more responsible, and a written document lends to stronger administrative support, enabling better staff compliance.

Alliances as a Marketing Tool

Marketing can be an expensive undertaking, especially for smaller gardens. An alliance may be an excellent opportunity to enable marketing dollars to make a greater impact. Smaller gardens can have greater influence in their local communities through an alliance by sharing costs and benefits, enhancing educational programs, broadening the impact of their missions, and improving public presence and community focus.

Consider an alliance as part of your marketing strategy. With careful planning, you may open the door to many wonderful and exciting opportunities that your garden has never experienced before.

Gerald Burgner is a freelance garden writer, consultant, and former public garden manager. For more information about the NCSU study, you may contact him at gsburgner@gmail.com.



Reference:

Burgner, Gerald S., Melissa A. Johnson, Julia L. Kornegay, Lucy K. Bradley, and Peter S. White. (2015). *Collaborations and Partnerships to Enhance Marketing Efforts of Public Gardens*. Manuscript submitted

DEFINITIONS

ALLIANCE: An arrangement (collaboration or partnership) between two or more organizations to accomplish a goal or objective that would be difficult to achieve otherwise

COLLABORATION: Generally short-term in duration and seeks to solve a particular issue or problem

PARTNERSHIP: Usually long-term and consists of established outcomes and objectives



For more information, please go to www.publicgardens.org/content/current-public-garden.

Tree Care on a **BUDGET**

Right: The tree failure of this *Pithecellobium dulce* was caused by included bark, which led to rot and adventitious rooting between leaders. Christina Dupuy, curator of trees at Montgomery Botanical Center, supervised its removal by a partner tree care company.



Left: Large trees like this *Ceiba pentandra* at Montgomery Botanical Center are maintained with the help of a local tree care company.

PHOTO CREDITS: MONTGOMERY BOTANICAL CENTER

BRYAN THOMPSONOWAK

In gardens, many people enjoy the calm of mature trees and the serenity they provide, without ever fully noticing their presence. In their quiet strength, trees play the role of being both beautiful and functional for gardens. The trees that constitute public collections sometimes look as if they care for themselves and need little maintenance, but as we all know, that's not true.

Gardens and institutions with tree collections (including universities, cemeteries, and arboreta) must either employ arborists or hire professional tree care services to perform needed maintenance. Unfortunately, many gardens lack the resources to employ full-time arborist crews or purchase the necessary equipment. As a way to provide tree care within limited budgets, gardens are increasingly contracting with commercial arborists. What many are discovering, however, is that while tree care companies may provide reduced project costs (compared to paying staff), the work can still be prohibitively expensive. In lean times, many gardens cut tree care budgets altogether and can be slow to restore funds as overall budgets increase.

Balancing maintenance with budgetary pressures is a tension known all too well by many gardens, and some are unable to provide a minimum level of care. Broken limbs hang precariously, and dead and dying trees stand awaiting the funds to remove them. While many gardens looking at tight budgets and aging collections are unable to see a path forward, workable, low-cost alternatives do exist. Tree-collection managers willing to think creatively and go beyond their normal job duties can learn from gardens that, despite having limited staff, small budgets, and aging collections, have found success in innovative

collaborations and nontraditional partnerships with tree care companies.

Founded in 1742, Moravian College in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, has no staff arborist and a small crew that takes care of both grounds and facilities. Randy Haffling, general services manager, has brought new life to the tree care program. Haffling takes the time to stay up-to-date on collection care needs, and works closely with several commercial companies to prioritize maintenance tasks. Based on his analysis, the most skilled (and expensive) tree care company prunes only the nicest and most visible specimen trees. And by looking beyond his department to partner with students, faculty, staff, and community groups, Haffling has also secured funding for an online collection catalog, increasing the collection's visibility and relevance.

Framingham, Massachusetts's New England Wild Flower Society also has a small budget and staff, but unlike Moravian College, has built a multi-decade relationship with a single tree care company. This relationship has endured for so long largely because of the society's mission, and the professionalism with which it invites the tree care company into the life of the organization. Because the society has involved the company in fulfilling its mission, the company donates one third of the cost of all tree work. The organization has thus enjoyed consistent expert pruning of the trees in its collection. This contribution is in addition to the regular donation of other services by the partnering arborist, including teaching courses at cost for the society's education department.

Montgomery Botanical Center (MBC) in Coral Gables, Florida, has established, perhaps, the most interesting relationship. In a quickly developing real estate market, they realized that their location was an asset that would allow them to capitalize on their connections within the local arboriculture community. In building two long-term relationships with commercial arborists, MBC provides space for equipment storage and the dumping of chips in exchange for several days of work per month from each company. In the end, MBC is able to cover almost all of their climbing work through these relationships.

These creative collaborations have helped these institutions stretch tight budgets, bring stability to the maintenance of their trees, and help shift the needle from reactionary to proactive models. Successful collection managers were willing to work across departmental lines and look outside their institutions for new partnerships. They took time to get to know their partners and treated them as they would financial donors. Keeping partners informed, sharing plans that they can easily connect to their companies, and letting them know that partnering with your institution is essential to fulfilling a mission to the public, are essential strategies for building relationships that work for everyone.

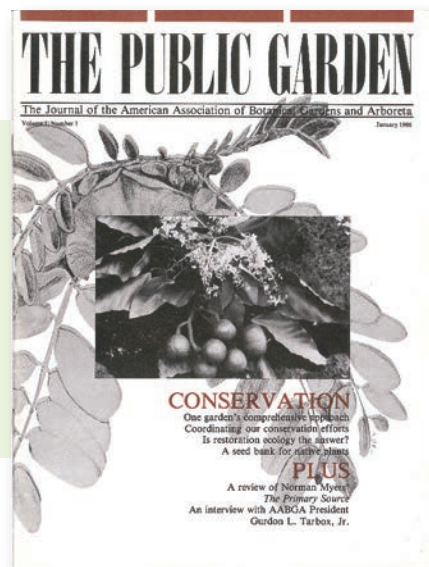
Bryan Thompsonowak is the assistant director of continuing education at the Morris Arboretum of the University of Pennsylvania. A recent graduate of the Longwood Graduate Program at the University of Delaware, he wrote his MS thesis on successful collaborations that further tree care maintenance at small institutions.





CREATING THE Public Garden

SHARON LEE



The creation of *The Public Garden* was a developmental milestone that marked the Association's transition from a volunteer-driven entity into a professional organization.

The magazine's history started with the 1985 report from the task force chaired by Gurdon Tarbox, the board's vice president, recommending a comprehensive long-range plan and a new broader mission statement. The primary goal was to upgrade the Association's resources and services so it could better promote its membership and the profession as a whole. According to Kris Jarantoski, a board member, "The board saw the Association and its member institutions as going beyond the care and display of plants to include education, science, visitor services, outreach, marketing, and other sources of income. It was a much more expansive and knowledgeable vision of gardens."

A key element of the plan included publications that reflected this broader view of public gardens. The Association's newsletter focused on Association business; its journal, the *Bulletin*, emphasized plants and research. Because the *Bulletin* depended on volunteer editors, the executive director and the board had little input into its content.

Bill Barrick, board treasurer, notes, "The *Bulletin* was more akin to a technical journal. The board felt it needed to be modernized, have more sizzle, be professionally done, and appeal to a broader audience."

The Beginning of Change

To produce the sizzle that would attract more readers, the board created a position for a part-time editor (six to

eight hours a week). I joined the two person staff in June 1985 with the mandate of either upgrading the *Bulletin* or creating a new magazine by January 1986. We made use of the 1985 Annual Conference at Haverford College to ask members about what kind of publication they wanted and needed; what they liked and didn't like about the *Bulletin*; and what kind of information they expected from the Association. We conducted a lunchtime open meeting for conference attendees and distributed a survey asking for specifics about the information members felt would promote their institution's future growth.

These suggestions shaped what would become *The Public Garden*. It was clear that the majority of members did not want the *Bulletin* in its current form. They wanted a magazine that covered the operations of a public garden and placed more focus on education, administration, fundraising, and outreach. They wanted a magazine that could serve as the public face for what they hoped was a growing profession. They felt they could get plant information from many other sources, but there were no magazines or literature of any kind that provided information about the operations of a public garden.

Planning a New Magazine

I recruited a group of knowledgeable garden professionals to form the Editorial Advisory Committee. With one part-time staff member and a very limited budget, we couldn't produce the

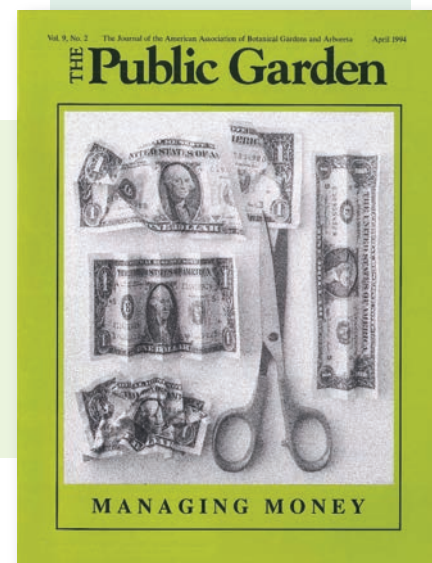
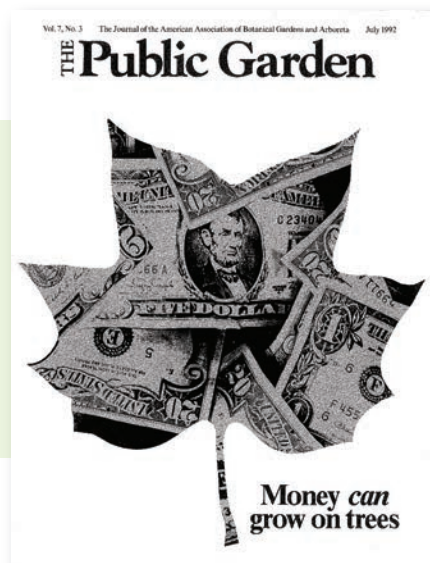
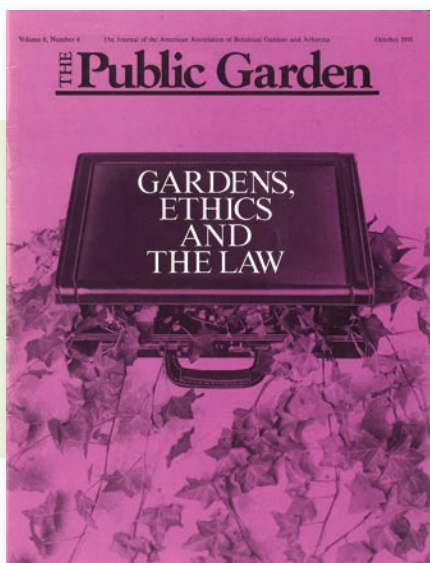
volumes of information members needed, but we could make each issue into a resource about a particular subject of current concern. The editorial plan was to feature five to six articles on one topic written by experts in the field. To cover what we couldn't include, we encouraged authors to list sources for additional information. To ensure that each issue has something for everyone, we created regular departments.

Despite her many responsibilities, Executive Director Susan Lathrop volunteered to be the magazine's proofreader. We hired a professional designer and, by calling every garden related business we knew, attracted enough advertisers to partially offset our costs.

Because the Association represented a range of plant related institutions, finding a title for the new magazine was difficult. To make the decision, board members were asked to identify their top three titles from those proposed. Second on everyone's list was *The Public Garden*, which turned out to be an excellent choice. I adopted public garden as the generic term for all member institutions. When the term became commonly used, the board in 2006 changed the organization's name to the American Public Gardens Association.

Why It Worked

The Public Garden became the public face of the Association and helped to fill the information gap members identified in



1985. Back issues were always in demand by new members; college and university faculty members wanted articles for their students; institutional members wanted copies for board members; and development officers wanted copies for funders to demonstrate the validity of public garden as cultural institutions.

The magazine worked because it was built on a base of volunteers, staff, and good will. Authors and gardens contributed all the photos and illustrations. Planners and reviewers volunteered enormous amounts of time. Readers called to suggest ideas for articles. Authors wrote and rewrote and put up with my cuts and changes. All contributed because they knew that the magazine was a good publication and they were giving back to a profession that they loved.

When I retired in 2005, we produced one of our most popular issues—*Why Do Public Gardens Matter?* It was with great pride that I closed my last introduction with the comment, which is still very true, “*The Public Garden* supports these remarkable institutions with useful information and unique insights, but most of all...it communicates with passion and understanding the broad and significant mission of public gardens.”

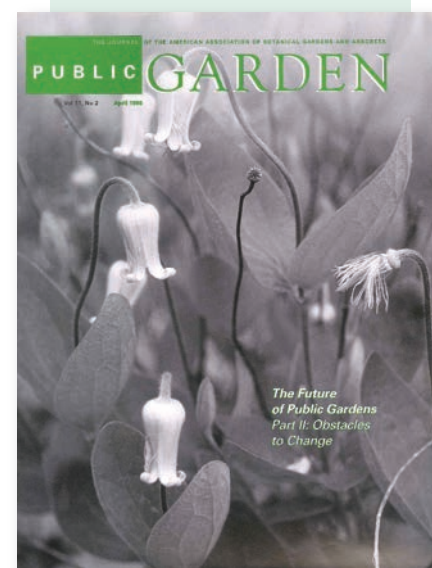
Sharon Lee retired as AABGA deputy director in 2005. She is co-author of Public Garden Management, the first textbook to examine the operations and management of a public garden, and is currently working with Donald Rakow and Meghan Gough on a book for Cornell University Press entitled Public Gardens and Community Revitalization.



Editor's Note: After Sharon retired, *Public Garden*, an essential part of the Association's public face, has continued to grow, building on the firm foundation she and others created. We offer a sincere thank you to her and to all the others who have contributed their talents throughout the years.

Since that first issue of *Public Garden* was published thirty years ago, the public horticulture industry has grown, and so has the membership of the American Public Gardens Association. In response to our evolving membership needs, *Public Garden* experienced several pivotal changes in 2015—a new editorial calendar, higher print quality, and an improved digital format. These small steps poised the magazine for the next stage of its evolution. The winter 2016 issue will introduce a new design and visual identity. The “new face” of *Public Garden* is in keeping with our strategic plan goals of increasing member engagement, value, advocacy, and awareness.

These landmark changes offer an opportunity to invite *Public Garden* writers, new and seasoned, to provide inspirational articles for its pages. Have a fresh, exciting story about your garden's people, plants, public, or programs? Send an e-query to me, Dorothea Coleman, Managing Editor, at publications@publicgardens.org.



GWEN STAUFFER

FLOCK: Birds on the Brink

Ganna Walska Lotusland, in Santa Barbara, California, operates under a county Conditional Use Permit that limits public access to fifteen thousand visitors per year, stifling our ability to provide programming beyond garden tours and a few special events. Nonetheless, in 2010, Lotusland launched annual, homegrown exhibitions to focus intensively on a topic critical to Lotusland's mission. Keeping with exhibit protocol, the 2015 contemporary art exhibit *Flock: Birds on the Brink* was inspired by the global loss of wild bird populations and their role as indicators of the health of our planet.

On display for three months, *Flock* celebrated the daily presence of birds in our communities while illustrating the critical impact of wild bird populations on global ecosystems and our own well-being. Managed organically for twenty years, Lotusland is a refuge to eighty-six species of birds that either reside year-round or make extended visits during seasonal migrations. These birds more than embellish the garden—they are pest-control allies, enhancing the success of our sustainable horticulture regimen.

Guest curator, Nancy Gifford, gathered artworks from over thirty-five local and international artists whose pieces were strong enough to stand on their own, and collectively delivered the message of bird and habitat conservation. Lotusland's staff managed artist contracts, wrote label content, and created and assisted with exhibit installations—a huge investment in staff effort.

Mounted in our pavilion galleries and—for the first time—throughout the gardens, *Flock* featured two-dimensional art, sculpture, video, music, and installations. Visitors approaching the exhibit entrance passed through the Lotusland-created *Silent Spring*, a gauntlet of black bird cages each labeled for an extinct bird and empty for the loss of species that will never return.

Within the gallery, New York artist David Hochbaum's installation



Murmuration



Nests for Lotusland

PHOTO CREDITS: GANNA WALSKA LOTUSLAND

Murmuration flew through the room, mimicking the behavior of vast flocks of migratory birds, such as the extinct passenger pigeon. In the nest room, dedicated to the incredible construction skills of birds, Mexican-born artist Maria Rendon's nest of knitting needles were complemented by real nests from birds living at Lotusland. Oakland-based artist Esther Traugot crochets delicate jackets around quail eggs to protect and “put back” what has been abandoned or broken. The gorgeous canaries in Lotusland's *Flutter and Strum* aviary added a dimension to their delightful warbling by plucking the strings of electric guitars as they flitted around.

In the garden, local artist R. T. Livingston's *Sitting Ducks* decoys, painted in ironic camouflage plumage, were safely hidden among the beach by the fern garden pool. Noted landscape architect

and artist-in-residence Gary Smith created four breathtaking installations, *Nests for Lotusland*. Inspiring lectures with some of the world's foremost authors and experts on birds and bird migration accompanied the exhibit.

Lotusland reached an audience of over five thousand visitors, increased membership, and increased revenue through sponsorships and art sales, while also delivering the important message that sustainable practices, policies, and lifestyles, can bring birds—and all other species—back from the brink.

Gwen Stauffer has served as executive director of Ganna Walska Lotusland, the incomparable estate gardens of opera diva Madame Ganna Walska, since 2008. Gwen has managed the mounting of “blockbuster” traveling art exhibits, and also created and mounted site-specific and homegrown art exhibits. She now develops site-specific, blockbuster art exhibits at Lotusland that deliver a whopping educational impact.



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