Executive Director’s Report

Steve Hootman
Executive Director & Curator

As our busy but very successful spring comes to an end, we can look back at what has been another fantastic season here at the RSBG. Thanks to our growing reputation, some spectacular spring weather, and of course, the efforts of our staff and volunteers, attendance in the Garden this year has surpassed every previous year going all the way back to 2003. Fantastic! This is no anomaly but rather may be attributed primarily to all of the major improvements in the Garden over the past few years, (a conservatory, a blue poppy meadow and a Victorian Stumpery, for example!). Indeed, for the past several years, our attendance has been steadily rising back to the levels we enjoyed in the early part of this new century prior to the dramatic worldwide drop-off in public garden visitation that was noted in the mid-2000’s (a subject of debate best left for another day). Nowadays, a common axiom among the staff is that, by focusing on simply getting people through the front gate for that first visit, even though it might not be “rhododendron-season,” we will have developed a new “customer” whom we will see again and again and who will be out telling their friends and neighbors about what a wonderful experience they had at the RSBG.

A huge thank you goes to volunteer Rollo Adams who is slowly retiring from managing the seed and pollen programs for the past many years. He has done a fantastic job and put in a remarkable amount of time and energy. Clarice Clark is now being trained to take over this important volunteer position.

The two-acre Sequim property bequeathed to us in the estate of Fran Rutherford was recently sold for $57,594. This money has been placed in the Conservatory Endowment Fund as per the wishes of our late friend and benefactor.

The Garden Gazebo renovation has been completed and has passed final inspection. The new gazebo is now ADA certified and is a beautiful structure that is once again one of the highlights of a garden visit. We will be re-landscaping the alpine garden around the structure over the coming months. Many thanks to the volunteers and donors who were vital to the completion and success of this project. Both the Garden Gazebo and the recently refurbished Henkins Temperate Greenhouse were officially dedicated at our recent Annual General Member’s meeting here in the garden.

In March we received a grant in the amount of $2,000 from the Washington State Nursery and Landscape Association for the retail intern position at the Garden Gift Shop and were able to hire a new student intern named Nicole Marcotte. This position covered plant sales on the weekends through mid-June. Nicole is also our horticultural intern and works in the garden and nursery through the rest of the week. In June she will become full-time in the garden/nursery. This latter and ongoing portion of our internship (Continued on page 2)

Steve Hootman, Deena Henkins and Mike Stewart at the Henkins Temperate Greenhouse dedication held during the Annual General Member’s Meeting.
Nursery News

Dennis Bottemiller
Nursery Manager/Propagator

While performing my routine nursery tour this morning, I was struck by how good the plants look. Early June is when most of the new growth has expanded and we know that the plants really are still alive. Earlier in the spring everything is happening too quickly to pay much attention to what next year’s plants are doing and as I walk by they look small and a little bedraggled. Then suddenly, the last event of the season is behind us and we can pay attention to the rest of the nursery.

Six weeks ago I remember thinking, “how in the world are we going to have anything for the Fall Catalog with all of these puny plants?” Then the magic of spring happens and suddenly we are bursting with all manner of plants ready for the catalog.

Watch for the Fall Catalog in your inbox soon!

Volunteer Corner

Thanks, Rollo Adams!

How do you say thank you for 29 years of dedicated volunteer service?

After time spent volunteering in the RSBG nursery and office, Rollo Adams has been in charge of the RSBG’s Seed and Pollen Program since 1998. This program is vitally important to our members, our mission and the horticultural community. For two or three days each week in the spring, Rollo has been found carefully hand-pollinating the species as they come into flower in the Garden. He monitors the ripening capsules throughout the summer and then collects, cleans and mails out the seed, all with immaculate record keeping.

Rollo was eager to take over the then faltering seed program due to his interest in seed production stemming from his days at the University of California at Davis. In the Vegetable Crops Department, he worked in crossing tomatoes to develop a tomato suitable for mechanical harvesting. Graduating in 1954 with a degree in Plant Science, he transitioned from tomatoes to pumpkins. Working on Libby’s pumpkin program, he refined their seed selection to meet the exceedingly high requirements of “Libby Select.”

Reflecting on his work with the complex pollen and seed production of rhododendrons, Rollo says, “The RSBG seed program has been a rewarding and enjoyable experience. I have learned a lot from the various species and from nature’s pollinators. Only the staff knows the Garden better than I do. Each species seems to have different criteria as to when the stigma is ready to be pollinated and the pollen is ready to be released.”

Over the years Rollo has had valuable assistance from several enthusiastic volunteers including Becky Reimer, Ken Hollingsworth and Bill Ehret. From 1999 through 2014, Rollo and his team processed orders for 8,037 seed packets. From

Executive Director’s Report

program is being funded primarily by a very generous grant of $10,000 recently received from the Pendleton and Elisabeth Carey Miller Charitable Foundation. Many thanks to both organizations.

I have just returned from leading a tour of RSBG members to Sikkim where we enjoyed spectacular Himalayan scenery, fantastic local food, and of course, an incredible diversity of rhododendrons, many of them in gorgeous full bloom. In all, we recorded 33 of the 36 taxa known to occur in Sikkim. It was a great group of people and we all enjoyed ourselves immensely. Full expedition reports and photos will be published in upcoming editions of the RSF Yearbook as well as the Journal American Rhododendron Society. In October, I will be exploring the mountains of Anhui and Hubei, China for some of the rarest and most remote rhododendrons that have yet to be introduced.

Many thanks to all of you who so generously contributed to our Annual Spring Garden Campaign. These annual fund-raising events are vital to our ongoing success and progress and we deeply appreciate each and every gift to the organization. We literally could not do it without you.
The inception of the pollen program in 2004, they produced, processed and packaged 3,440 pollen capsules. Seeds that Rollo and his team produced were sent to 17 foreign countries and pollen to seven. Imagine the multitude of progeny stemming from Rollo’s dedication to rhododendron species!

Rollo was selected as the Volunteer of the Year in 2009, awarded for not only his work with the Seed and Pollen Program, but also for his assistance in the nursery, office, and on the handyman team, “Thursday Crew.” He also served several years as the slide librarian on the photo committee, where he organized, labeled and documented each image as it came into the collection. If it needs doing, Rollo gets it done!

How can we truly express our appreciation for Rollo’s many years of dedicated, cheerful service? Perhaps we all can! You may send him an email at v-rollo@RhodyGarden.org to let him know how much he is appreciated. Let’s see how many emails Rollo receives!

The Seed and Pollen Program Continues

Rollo Adams has been tutoring Clarice Clark to continue the valuable Seed and Pollen Program at the RSBG.

Clarice has been a member of the RSBG for 33 years. During that time she was once employed as the Horticulturist/Nursery Manager and later as the Program Coordinator for 4 years. She has been a member of the Western North American Rhododendron Species Project (WNARSP) since its inception 20 years ago. She has written several articles for the ARS Journal and given programs to ARS chapters and Western Regional meetings.

There are only a small number of people interested in growing rhododendron species from seed, but there is high interest in developing new hybrids of rhododendron utilizing our pollen from verified true clones. Therefore, her emphasis will be concentrated on the pollen side of the program while maintaining the seed distribution as well. Have you created any interesting hybrids using pollen that you’ve ordered from the RSBG? If so, we’d love to see photos of your successes. Send your photos (under 9MB per email) to seeds@rhodygarden.org.

Orders for rhododendron seed and pollen are handled through our website, where the complete availability list is posted: http://rhodygarden.org/cms/shop/order-plantsseeds/. Emails should be sent to Seeds@RhodyGarden.org.

The Rhododendron Legacy Circle

The Rhododendron Legacy Circle is open to new members who have made provisions for the Rhododendron Species Foundation in their financial or estate plans. Established in 2013, the Legacy Circle enables the RSF to recognize and show appreciation for our friends’ generosity during their lifetime.

Legacy gifts are an impactful and vital means to ensure the RSF’s future success. There are many creative ways to provide a contribution to the RSF while enhancing and safeguarding one’s own financial situation. Planned giving helps maximize the tax benefits of charitable giving, allowing people to provide a gift they may not have thought possible.

For more information and to access an enrollment form, go to: http://rhodygarden.org/cms/get-involved/planned-giving/ or contact Grace@RhodyGarden.org.
Greetings from the Garden Shop!

Ivory Ramos
Garden Shop Manager

The twenty-two acres and miles of trails within the Rhody Garden can be explored randomly or by following a seasonal “Self-Guided Tour” map and guide provided by the Garden Gift Shop. It is fun to just wander around the Garden and explore each area without any rhyme or reason. On the other hand, it’s also a treat to have a trained guide share fascinating facts and details while observing the current plants of interest along the paths. Thankfully, all of these options are available at the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden!

Guided Tours led by trained, knowledgeable docents are available year round. Tour rates are different from admission rates. For groups of 10 people or less, the rate for a guided tour is $100.00. For groups of 11 people or more, the rate is $10.00 per person. For more details, please call (253)838-4646 extension 140. Whether you are interested in touring during peak bloom season (between the months of March to June), during the fall with all of the magnificent, colorful foliage, or even if you are only interested in a tour of the RSBG’s Rutherford Conservatory, these are all available upon request. Guided tours during peak bloom season fill up fast so we recommend you book your tours by February to ensure optimal scheduling. Some tour groups come back year after year but at different times to enjoy the wide range of bloom times among our hundreds of different species.

An average of 20-25 guided tours are given each year by our docents. Most of these groups are typically garden clubs, activity centers, plant societies, senior centers, tourist groups, and even Master Gardeners. Between January and May of this year, 335 guests have taken advantage of a guided tour.

Currently, there is a total of six docents that lead the RSBG’s guided tours, three of which are not only docents but also loyal volunteers of the Rhody Garden: Canfield Smith, John Parker, and Rollo Adams. They’ve been a part of the RSBG for many years and are filled with knowledge regarding rhododendrons, the Garden itself, and also the history of the Garden. Aside from RSBG’s three docents, from time to time staff members such as Dennis Bottemiller, Atsuko Gibson, and Steve Hootman guide scheduled tours. With such a fantastic group of tour guides here at the RSBG who wouldn’t want to schedule a guided tour?!

If you have an interest in learning to be docent, a good first step is to accompany a regularly scheduled tour and observe these talented folks in action. Just call the office at 253-838-4646 extension 100 and let us know that you want to volunteer.

Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the Rhododendron Species Foundation was held on Saturday, May 2nd. Breaking with the tradition of holding the meeting at the Weyerhaeuser Company headquarters building, 59 attendees completely filled the new meeting room at the RSBG office. It was a joy to have not only long-time members but also brand new members in attendance, including members from several states, Canada and even Mexico.

The Board nominees were voted on and the complete list is on page 7. Please join us in welcoming new Board member Kenneth Cox.

Jeanine Smith was honored during the Annual General Member’s Meeting for her many years of dedicated service to the RSF.
Evening in the Garden 2015

“Bluegrass in Bloom”

Katie Swickard
Program & Outreach Manager

Join us on the Appalachian Trail for an evening of live Bluegrass music, Southern BBQ, Garden tours and good times with good friends! Grab a beer or sip a glass of wine on the Terrace while listening to live Bluegrass. Then stroll through the Garden and Conservatory on the ever-popular guided tours by Steve and Dennis. Members and their guests are invited to enjoy all this and more at the “Bluegrass in Bloom” Evening in the Garden on Saturday, August 1st from 5 to 8:30 pm.

The Evening in the Garden is held annually to celebrate our wonderful members and volunteers, who are the very heart of our organization. As a special treat this year, the bluegrass band, The Missing Pieces will perform. The group includes Don Share of the DownTown Mountain Boys on guitar and vocals, and Mary Maass on fiddle and vocals.

Dinner by Longhorn Catering will include barbecued chicken, pulled pork, traditional Southern side dishes, plus we’ll have our wildly popular decadent dessert buffet. Vegetarian and gluten-free options will be available.

Bidding on rare and choice plants during the “Live Auction for Intern Funding” provides the unique opportunity to acquire plants that are not available for sale at any other time. There will also be one-of-a-kind special items for your bidding pleasure. The RSBG Summer Intern Program provides an extremely valuable source of assistance for our small staff. The amount of funding that we have for this program dictates how many hours and how long we are able to employ an intern. Plan to bid often and bid well! Donation containers will also be on each table.

The Evening in the Garden is one of the highlights of the year for all of us. The staff looks forward to spending a delightful summer evening with our members and guests. Please register early as space is limited and we often sell out. Registration is required and is open only to members, volunteers and their guests.

Phone reservation may be made at 253-838-4646 x. 140 (Garden Gift Shop) or you may use the registration form on this page, or register online at https://rhodygarden.org/cms/events/9492/2015-members-evening-in-the-garden/
An Intern’s View

Nicole Marcotte
2015 Summer Intern

The work of an intern may be considered “dirty work” to some, but for me, it's the type of dirty work that I love to do. It’s the mud-under-your-fingernails, grass-stained-pants, wet-boots-all-day type of work. But it's also the type of work that makes you feel fulfilled at the end of the day: when your mind is tired, your body is sore, and you know that you accomplished something with your day. That's how I end most days here at the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden, and I wouldn't have it any other way.

I am an east-coast transplant, who graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Environmental Studies in 2012, moving from Vermont to Washington to take part in an AmeriCorps program with EarthCorps. EarthCorps is a non-profit based out of Seattle that focuses on training young leaders in best management practices for habitat restoration. Over a year of service, I worked on a wide variety of projects including invasive plant removal, native plantings, erosion control, and trail construction and maintenance.

After spending a year focusing on the big-picture of habitat conservation, I wanted to get a more intimate look at the landscape, particularly at the flora that comprises it. When I saw the Garden and Nursery internship available with the RSBG, I knew that it would be the perfect opportunity to get that closer look into plant ecology and physiology that I was hoping for.

Now after being here for a little over three months, I can honestly say that this was the experience I was looking for. From weeding in the greenhouses and propagating cuttings, to watering seedlings and maintaining garden beds, I now have a much better understanding of how each task, no matter how big or small, plays a critical role in nursery and garden management.

I have also had the opportunity to work on the weekends up in our Garden Gift Shop and Nursery. I have been available to customers to answer any questions they may have and to help them find what plants will work best in their own gardens. This opportunity has allowed my knowledge of plant species and their physiologies to truly flourish, and I now feel comfortable in handling any type of question that may come my way.

I am hoping to use my newfound knowledge in my future pursuits, as I am considering going back to graduate school to study plant ecology and conservation. I would love to someday meld the aesthetic and educational pursuits of botanical gardens with the overall goals of habitat restoration.

But until I am back in a classroom, I am going to take advantage of one of the greatest perks of interning here, which is working with such a knowledgeable staff! Often times I think to myself, “How can they know so much about plants?” and it only encourages me to work harder and to someday get to a level of knowledge and intelligence that they are all at. But in order to get to that level, it will take some more dirty work for now; so here’s to more days with wet boots, more grass stains, more dirt under my nails!

How to Green Your Gift-Giving

Katie Swickard

Choosing eco-friendly gifts is not only possible, it's affordable. You don't have to buy trendy or expensive gifts to stay sustainable. These green gift-giving ideas will help guide you through your shopping whether you're shopping for a garden club, wedding, birthday or other special occasion present.

While being gentle on the Earth is important, it's equally essential to give a gift your recipient will love and appreciate. Giving from a place of generosity and thoughtfulness will accomplish both.

Consider:

• A gift of experiences with a gift membership to the RSBG - your recipient will enjoy free year-round admission to the Garden to delight and de-stress in nature. Overseas and other distant members enjoy the annual Yearbook, priority ordering from RSBG’s catalogs, as well as supporting species conservation;
• A gift certificate to spend on just the right plant from the wide selection at the Garden Gift Shop and Nursery;
• A gift of learning – photography classes at the Garden are offered at various times throughout the year;
• Buy them an evening of entertainment and dinner – RSBG members may bring non-member guests to the wildly popular Evening in the Garden on first Saturday of August;
• An engraved stone make an excellent gift to commemorate any special occasion – a significant birthday, anniversary, or simply your recipient's name can be engraved. How about one with your garden club’s name?
• Give the gift of charity - any impossible-to-buy-for people on your list? Donate to the Garden in their name.

Many people buy gifts out of obligation, without really considering the impact on the environment. Do the presents you're buying have a purpose or meaning? Gifts purchased through the RSBG can please your recipient while also supporting the species conservation mission of the Garden.
WELCOME NEW MEMBERS (1/1/15 to 5/31/15)

Thank you to the following individuals and organizations whose donations help us research and conserve Rhododendron species.

AmazonSmile Foundation
ARS Juan de Fuca
Russell Barber
Jeff Bell
The Benevity Community Impact Fund
Walt & Carolyn Brooks
Joan Buhler
Steve Butdorf & Barbara Carroll
Patrick & Jean Cummins
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Ian P. Walker
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Enu Valley
Rhododendron Garden
In Honor of Bonnie Butt
Ann D. and Pat Robbins
In Memory of John Murphy
ARS Connecticut Chapter
In Memory of Betty Jane Mason
Steel Lake Presbyterian Church
Legacy Circle Members
Deena Henkons
Donald King
Peter Norris

Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden

The RSBG Newsletter is published in spring, summer, and fall by the Rhododendron Species Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Submissions are due by the first of the month, 8 weeks before publication. Email submissions to Newsletter Editor Sonja Nelson: sonjan@wavecable.com

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Rhododendron kesangiae.

Nicole Marcotte

RSBG CALENDAR 2015
Monthly through September, 4-7pm
“Third Thursdays Garden Mingle”
Free for the general public
June 21, 10am – 4pm
Summer Solstice – “Rhodys Rising”
July 18, 10am – 5pm
Federal Way Symphony Tour of Gardens
August 1, 5 – 8:30pm
Evening in the Garden
“Bluegrass in Bloom”
Members and their guests only
August 8, 10am – 4pm
Federal Way Soroptimist “Art in the Park”
Scholarship fundraiser
October 17 – 24, 10am – 4pm
Foliage Festival & Plant Sale
Sat 17 Opening Day Plant Sale with Dan Hinkley’s Windcliff Selections
Sun 18 Fall for Maples
Mon 19 Monday Open
Fri 23 Fall for Ferns
Sat 24 Fall for Bonsai
November 21, 1 – 3pm
RSF Fall Board Meeting
December 4, noon – 2pm
Volunteer Holiday Party