Executive Director’s Report
Steve Hootman
Executive Director & Curator

Those of us gardening here in the normally delightful Mediterranean climate of the Pacific NW have thoroughly enjoyed / suffered through what people will say was either the greatest or worst summer ever. This depends of course on whether you are looking at it from the point of view of days spent at the beach vs. days spent trying to keep your monsoon-climate plants alive. In reality, following an incredibly dry and warm spring with precipitation and snow-pack at record low levels, we zoomed straight into summer in mid-May—about six weeks ahead of schedule (it is typically quite cool and rainy right through the Fourth of July holiday). We ended up with the hottest and driest June on record followed by the same for July (this after the July record was broken last year!). August began on the same path but temperatures went down a bit late in the month and we actually enjoyed a brief reprieve from the baking hot and dry extremes with a couple of inches of rain over several cool days late in the month. It was too little too late however, with the end result of massive amounts of watering and massive die-off of struggling plants.

Looking at specifics—we had a mere 0.58 inches of rain in May (the average is 1.78) and only 0.23 in June (average is 1.49) which means the weeks of May 1 through June 30 were the driest in recorded Seattle history, July 2015 was the hottest month ever recorded in Seattle, with an average temperature of 71.2 degrees. The month featured an astonishing 10 days with high temperatures in the 90s—capped by a sweltering 95-degree reading on July 19. With over 120 years of records on the books, Seattle had never seen more than 9 days with temperatures at or above 90 degrees in a single year, let alone a single month.

In June, we said goodbye to our Garden Gift Shop Manager and Part-time Office Assistant, Ivory Ramos, who had made the decision to go back to school. After a long search and many interviews, we are very happy to have hired Pat Whempner as our new Gift Shop Coordinator and Kathy Blair as our new Office Assistant. Pat has great experience in retail as well as having retired from a career in design. She has some fantastic new ideas and designs for the Gift Shop as well as our ongoing, but now quite revved-up program of signage and interpretation. Kathy has an impressive background in business management and some much needed and critical computer experience. Both are already making great contributions and have proven to be great additions to the RSBG team.

In the Garden we are finally able to move on to (Continued on page 2)
Greetings from the Garden Shop!

Pat Whempner
Garden Shop Coordinator

I am delighted to have been hired as Coordinator of the Garden Gift Shop. I get to work in the middle of an extraordinary 22-acre garden “Where the Wild Things Grow.” I also enjoy the team of staff, members, and volunteers who are passionate about rhody specimens from far-flung places, cultivation, conservation, and education.

After a couple of weeks gaining my footing, I have begun to have time to read about the collecting trips, attend presentations, and hear tales. There are so many stories to tell about our Garden. The Shop is our front door, the first chance we have to tell our story. Next year you may notice some changes in the Shop. We will be working towards introducing the story of our Garden and stocking some merchandise reflecting the adventure and color of the places that are part of our rhody’s stories. Our goal will be to offer our visitors something meaningful to take home in addition to their photos and garden memories.

As for my own background, some of it you may have already guessed. My experience is very diverse and includes architecture, retail management and design, museum exhibit design, and fine wine expertise.

In closing let me take this opportunity to especially thank our longstanding Shop employee Tammi Finnick and our shop volunteer Marianne Lanning. Both have generously been helping me learn my way around the Shop. I would also like to slip in a reminder that we always need more volunteers. The new Point of Sale system should be in place before the end of year, and this will make training to work in the Shop a piece of cake! If you enjoy the Garden and chatting with people from all around the world, this is the place to volunteer. Ask me about the benefits: patw@rhodygarden.org

PS Be sure and check out our monthly specials posted on Facebook!

Executive Director’s Report continued from page 1.

maintenance, improvements and renovations now that the hottest and driest time of the year is behind us. In conjunction with the completed renovation of the Garden Gazebo this past spring, we have begun the long needed renovation of the adjacent Alpine Garden and have already prepared two new beds by removing several large shading and competing trees, removing the native and aggressive understory plants (salal, salmonberry, etc.) and bringing in fresh sandy soil to rebuild and raise the planting beds. These two beds are along the outer edges of the Alpine Garden and will be planted with some of the larger-growing alpine Rhododendron species such as wightii, bhutanense and campanulatum. We will continue our renovations throughout the winter as we move to the interior portions which will be replanted with smaller-growing and very dwarf species. In addition, we are in the midst of discussions regarding a possible rocky stream and series of waterfalls in the Alpine Garden. This would be a great addition to the Garden overall and would really cap off and highlight what will soon once again be one of the crown jewels of the RSBG.

We still have no word from the Weyerhaeuser Corporation regarding the upcoming sale of their property (and thus our lease with them) here in Federal Way but are continuing to be proactive in our dealings with the company and the city of Federal Way.

In early August we enjoyed another fine “Evening in the Garden” on the Rutherford Conservatory Terrace with great music, excellent food, a rousing auction to benefit the Internship Program and the companionship of our friends on a beautiful warm evening.

In October I will be heading back to China to search for new rhododendrons and other interesting plants including visits to a few regions that are completely new to me and my companions.

Bring on the rain!
The Opportunity in Misfortune

Atsuko Gibson
Assistant Curator

Misfortune can bring opportunity to a garden. When the winter windstorm of 2014 took out the towering cedar near the Gazebo, suddenly an opportunity opened up to develop a new display area. Cedar trees are difficult to garden under due to their extensive surface root systems. We had been growing a large patch of *Polygonatum x hybridum* (Giant Solomon’s Seal—easily grown in dry shade) there because nothing else would thrive. Near the new cedar stump is an old organic boggy area full of moisture-loving seeds such as buttercups, salmonberry and lady ferns. This area was neglected for quite some time. Now we have an exciting new design for this site—a second Himalayan blue poppy display bed!

The location is adjacent to the ADA accessible trail just past the Gazebo. The original Blue Poppy Meadow is located at the bottom of the Garden down a sloping hill, which made it a challenge for those with disabilities. The ADA accessible trail used to be a single path that started just outside the Rutherford Conservatory and ended at the Gazebo. Now, it will be a loop of the inner garden from the Rutherford Conservatory (opened to public 2010), to the Gazebo (renovated in 2015) to the new Blue Poppy Glade (to be planted fall 2015) to the May Garden (completed in 2014) and then back to the Conservatory and Gift Shop. This ADA accessible trail is full of new additions. The whole trail is level and topped with a layer of fine compacted gravel.

Preparation for the new Blue Poppy Glade

The plan is already in action. With the help of volunteers, we have removed the weeds and brush which were overtaking the site. A thin layer of sand will be added to provide good drainage for the crowns of the newly planted *Meconopsis*. The light conditions are now perfect with the removal of the cedar tree. In addition, this area is surrounded by beautiful flowering trees, such as *Magnolia sieboldii* and *Stewartia pseudocamellia*, that bloom in late spring in conjunction with the blue poppies—it should be a great floral display. We hope to complete the planting this fall.

What started as the misfortune and loss of a towering tree has given the Garden an amazing new display bed that will be enjoyed by people of all abilities. Be sure to take a peek at our progress next time you are in the Garden.

Annual RSBG Photo Calendar

The 2016 RSBG Photo Calendar has arrived! Enjoy beautiful color photos of the Garden’s floral abundance taken by RSBG members, volunteers, our intern and friends of the RSBG. Never lose track of when the Spring Plant Sale, Blue Poppy Day or the Foliage Festival will be held as the RSBG event dates are already entered.

Be sure to order enough calendars for yourself and to stock up for holiday gifts. They also make a great door prize for your garden club or ARS chapter meetings.

The calendars are available in the Garden Gift Shop for $19.95. They may also be ordered online at http://rhody-garden.org/cms/shop/online-store/. Help support the conservation of *Rhododendron* species with your purchase of our annual photo calendar.
2015 Foliage Festival & Plant Sale

October 17 to 24  10 am — 4 pm
FREE Admission for all! On-site Plant Sale, Fall Color Tours, Speakers & Demonstrations

Celebrate the fall season with free admission to the week-long Foliage Festival and Plant Sale. The Festival features unique speakers, demonstrations, and daily tours of both the RSBG’s fall color and the Pacific Bonsai Museum. Visitors will also find excellent deals on outstanding species rhododendrons, companion plants and ferns, with one free “Garden Pass” admission for every $50 purchase of RSBG plants. In addition to the daily plant sales, enjoy special focus days throughout the Festival.

Saturday, Oct. 17th - Opening Day Plant Sale with Dan Hinkley’s Windcliff Selections
Enjoy special pricing on a wide selection of rhododendrons, ferns and companion plants. At 1 pm Steve Hootman, RSBG Executive Director & Curator, will speak on “Exciting New Introductions,” followed by a Fall Color Tour at 2 pm.
Today’s Plant Sale Special: 1/2 off Rhododendron ‘Wine and Roses’

Sunday, Oct. 18th - Fall for Maples with Arbutus Garden Arts plant selections
Arbutus Garden Arts, a vibrant nursery and display garden in SE Portland, will bring a splendid selection of maples and companion plants, including shade-tolerant conifers and Epimediums. At 1 pm, Arbutus Garden Arts owner Norm Jacobs will be speaking on “Japanese Maples and Companion Plants”. Learn more about his maple oasis at http://www.arbutusgarden.com/index.html.

Monday, Oct. 19th - Monday Plant Sale
This is the ONLY Monday of the year that the Garden is open! Make sure to stop by for Monday Only plant sale deals. At 1 pm, join a Bonsai Fall Tour with a 2 pm RSBG Fall Color Tour to follow.
Today’s Plant Sale Special: 1/2 off the new fragrant intro Rhododendron faithiae

Tuesday, Oct. 20th - 1/2 off Rhododendron qiaojiaense CGG#

Wednesday, Oct 21st - 1/2 off Rhododendron macabeanum
Thursday, Oct. 22nd - 1/2 off Rhododendron asterochnoum

Friday, October 23rd - Fall for Ferns
Discover the fascinating world of ferns growing in the RSBG’s woodland gardens and the Hardy Fern Foundation’s Victorian Stumpery. Richie Steffen will speak at 1 pm on “Ferns You Can’t Live Without.” Join a 2 pm Fern Tour with HFF Curator, Jo Laskowski, for an insider’s look at the ferns of the RSBG.
Today’s Plant Sale Special: 1/2 off R. yuefengense plus shop a great collection of rarely offered ferns provided by the Hardy Fern Foundation

Saturday, October 24th - Fall for Bonsai
Delve into the ancient world of bonsai at the Pacific Bonsai Museum with 1pm bonsai demonstration by Pacific Bonsai Museum Curator, Aarin Packard showing various bonsai techniques, design concepts and care tips. A book signing with Dave De Groot, former PBM Curator, for his new book, “Principles of Bonsai Design,” will be held from 11am to 1pm.
Today’s Plant Sale Special: 1/2 off Rhododendron bureavii wc by Steve Hootman in China
2015 Evening in the Garden

Katie Swickard
Program and Outreach Manager

Lively bluegrass music from “The Missing Pieces” welcomed dinner guests to the Rutherford Terrace for the eighth annual Evening in the Garden. Saturday, August 1st provided sunny skies, warm temperatures and a Garden filled with new additions and upgrades. During the guided tours led by Steve and Dennis guests were able to visit the newly restored Gazebo, the May Garden and hear about exciting new additions to the RSBG.

The band played on during the Southern BBQ dinner, catered by Longhorn BBQ, and the always popular delectable dessert buffet.

The Live Auction for Intern Funding featured ten rare plants as well as a custom hanging wire plant basket of the same style as seen in the Rutherford Conservatory, which was crafted by our own Dennis Bottemiller. The lucky winner will have an individualized session with Dennis for planting their basket with choice RSBG plants. This is the second year that this highly-prized auction item has been offered. You won’t want to miss upcoming future auctions! At total of $1,500 was raised for the intern fund, enabling us to extend the length of time we are able to employ an intern.

After a relaxing evening socializing with fellow members and friends, guests went home with a gift of a potted hydrangea, started and grown by RSBG staff.

Free Admission to Tacoma Museum of Glass
October 24-31

Show your RSBG membership card and get free access to visit the Tacoma Museum of Glass (MOG) from October 24th through the 31st. You’ll be able to view the opening of the display by Joey Kirkpatrick and Flora C. Mace: Every Soil Bears Not Everything and Botanicals. The collaborative team of Kirkpatrick and Mace are pioneers of early contemporary glass and were close colleagues of Dale Chihuly. Their botanicals in glass will delight your horticultural senses. An RSBG staff person will be on hand to answer questions on Saturday, Oct. 24th from 12-3pm.

The MOG is located at 1801 Dock Street, Tacoma, WA 98402 and is open Wednesday through Saturday, 10am-5pm, Sundays 12-5pm. The museum is closed Monday and Tuesday (26th and 27th). Visit http://museumofglass.org for more information.

Become a Friend of the RSBG on Facebook

Peek into the daily world of the Garden through photos and comments on our Facebook page. Learn about unique plants, special events and discover what’s happening in the Garden. https://www.facebook.com/RhodyGarden

Email Newsletter

Please help us stretch our dollars further! Request to receive your newsletter by email and save the RSBG the cost of printing and mailing. This is especially valuable if you are outside the USA. Please be sure to send us an update if your email address has changed. Just email Info@RhodyGarden.org and ask to receive your newsletter electronically. We promise not to share your address.
Online Plant Catalog is Live

Nicole Marcotte
RSBG Intern

Ordering your favorite plants just became easier with our new interactive plant catalog! While the RSBG Plant Catalog has been posted online as a document for many years, customers now have the option of plant shopping with the click of a few buttons.

Starting with our Fall 2015 Plant Catalog, you are now able to explore our interactive, searchable database of plants all through the ease of visiting the RhodyGarden.org website. The catalog is fully searchable based on various attributes including Rhododendron species type, such as dwarf, vireya or hybrid along with companion plants, and tree species. The catalog is also searchable by our trusted icons, including: Steve's Picks, Fragrant Flowers, New Offerings, Fall Color, and Easy to Grow species.

Want to learn more about the species available? You can simply click the “more info” icons where you can learn more about each individual species’ growth habits, hardiness, and flower type. Still not sure if the species is what you’re looking for? You can also check available photos of the species to see more details of foliage and inflorescence. Because this is an interactive, searchable database it will be invaluable for conducting your plant research.

But you can do more than just browse the catalog online; in fact, you can actually purchase plants right on our website! So now ordering your plants through our catalog will be as simple as clicking a button!

Ready, set, go explore: http://rhodygarden.org/cms/2015-fall-catalog-items/
WELCOME NEW MEMBERS (6/1/14 to 8/31/14)

Grace Ahn  Tim Austin  Susan Beecham  Diane Boyer  Stephen Carter  David & Mary Ann Crowell  Kaitlin Crozier


CONTRIBUTORS - THANK YOU! (6/1/15 to 8/31/15)

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


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GiveBIG Campaign  Sten Beckman  Kyle Brown  Earl Ecklund  Scott Finfrock  Linda Gough  Mollie Groendyke


Intern Program  Miller Foundation  Karen Swenson

Spring Garden Campaign  Wilbur Bluhm  Werner Brack

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

Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden

Pat Whempner  Ben Meersman  Tammi Finnick  Kathy Blair  Atsuko Gibson  Executive Director/Curator  Nurse Manager/Propagator  Garden Shop Attendant  Office Assistant  Assistant Curator  Garden Shop Coordinator  Garden Shop Attendant  kathy@rhodygarden.org  atsuko@rhodygarden.org  ben@rhodygarden.org  tammi@rhodygarden.org  steve@rhodygarden.org  dennis@rhodygarden.org  katie@rhodygarden.org

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Garden Hours

Tuesday through Sunday 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
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Executive Committee

President: Michael Stewart  1st Vice President: Sean Rafferty  2nd Vice President: Joshua Green, III  Treasurer: Bob Gust  Secretary: Deena Henkins  Members at Large: Anne Gross  Jeanine Smith  Joseph Ronsley  Immediate Past President: Charles Muller

Board of Directors


Board of Directors (Honorary)

George Weyerhaeuser  Peter Cox  Robert Franz  Honore Hacanson  Patricia McDowell  June Sinclair  Herbert Spady

Executive Committee

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Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden
RSBG CALENDAR 2015

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 with
        Arbutus Garden Arts 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