
RHODODENDRON

SPECIES BOTANICAL GARDEN

FALL NEWSLETTER

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Executive Director's Report by Steve Hootman

Greetings as we head into our autumn season and look forward to the coming annual winter precipitation. As in many matters in the year 2020, the summer ended in a very strange fashion. In late September, a thick layer of smoke rolled in from the ongoing forest fires in California and Oregon, blanketing the region for almost two weeks in what was considered at the time the third worst air pollution on the planet. With the strange light and dangerous breathing conditions, it was all quite surreal on top of everything else going on in the world.

I would like to thank all of you who participated in our Spring Fund Drive. Your generosity was especially thoughtful and important when you consider the ongoing economic uncertainty we are all facing. I would also like to thank the very generous individuals who put up the initial matching funds that helped to make this a very successful drive.

Stay healthy and remember that autumn is the best time of year for planting so be sure to have a look at the fine selection of plants in the Fall Catalog on our website (now with the option to order online).

Right: October in the Plant Sales Area.
Below: Smokey air at the RSBG.



Fall Plant Sale Saturday, October 17 and Sunday, October 18

Hundreds of plants marked 50% off, free garden admission, and fantastic fall foliage.



The 2019 Expedition to China - A Zoom Lecture

We recently hosted our first ever digital lecture. While the talk has passed, we are still offering an opportunity to view a recording of the talk. Please email us at Info@RhodyGarden.org for instructions on how to purchase the talk. A hearty thank you to all who attended!

About the Lecture: RSBG Curator and Executive Director Steve Hootman presents a Zoom lecture featuring his latest expedition to China. Steve will take you to the mountains of south Yunnan and adjacent Guangxi with images and details about the plants seen during his fall 2019 expedition. This trip is another in a series designed to explore the regions away from the main center of distribution of the genus *Rhododendron* in an effort to fill in the gaps in our knowledge and to introduce new taxa into cultivation.

Highlights include the first botanical exploration of a rhododendron-covered mountain on the Vietnam border, as well as several days in some of the finest remaining old-growth forests in China. Steve discusses and illustrates new findings and theories about subsection *Fortunea*, including several new, enigmatic, and even unknown species and their relationship to each other.



This entertaining and educational lecture and discussion includes beautiful images from some of the most remote and least explored regions of China.

What to do with all the leaves? by Will Clausen

As the days shorten and nights cool down, deciduous trees quickly switch from summer to autumn mode. Here in the conifer-rich Northwest, we do not have the blaze of fall color through the landscape that is found in other parts of the country. In fact, our greatest fall color extravaganza comes with the turning of two native conifers, the deciduous western and subalpine larches. But, for all our wild evergreen conifers, we have plenty of broadleaf deciduous trees planted in our yards and parks ready to carpet the ground with the first winds of autumn. What to do with all these leaves?

There are any number of things you can do with leaves. To land on the best option, consider among other things what kind of gardening you do, and the type and number of deciduous trees on your property. The common practice of bagging and dumping is sometimes the only option, but it is good to consider alternatives if you can. I will go over three uses for your fallen leaves below.

MULCH WITH THEM

For the most part, leaves make great mulch. Those from your own trees also happen to be free and easy to obtain. A layer of leaves will benefit your garden by helping to regulate soil temperatures, retain soil moisture, smother small annual weeds, create habitat for insects, and add nutrients to the soil as they decompose.

Thin leaves, like those of many Japanese maple cultivars, will

"... [leaves will] help regulate soil temperatures, retain soil moisture, smother small annual weeds, create habitats for insects, and add nutrients to the soil as they decompose."

quickly break down all on their own. These really do not need to be dealt with at all besides raking them into the area that you want them. The leaves of other trees, like oaks, are much thicker and will take longer to decompose. Removing some of these thicker leaves or putting them through a leaf shredder before mulching is usually best, otherwise over the years you will end up with a stifling layer of leaf litter.

A bag-less mulching lawn mower is a great tool for taking care of leaves on the lawn, and much less work than raking and bagging.



Above: Fall foliage in the RSBG



Above: *Oxydendrum arboreum*
Right: Fall at the RSBG

Depending on the amount of leaves, you may have to go over the lawn more than once. These shredded leaves will benefit your lawn in the same way that they benefit your garden beds.

COMPOST WITH THEM

Dried leaves make an important addition to your home compost by adding carbon and loosening the mix which allows for the air flow needed to create a good blend. As with mulching, a leaf shredder comes in handy for thicker leaves but even without it, most leaves will quickly break down. Once ready, using this rich compost returns the nutrients once locked in the leaves to your garden bed.

SAVE THEM

Leaves can come in handy by providing winter protection for marginally hardy plants in your garden. Pile them on thickly to cover the crowns of plants or in extreme situations, pile them high around the base of tender small trees and shrubs and pack them around the sides of exposed containers. They act like a blanket, giving your zone denial plants a little bit of insulation against the biting cold. In the spring, you can use these leaves as mulch or add them to your compost.

Here at the RSBG, we take a laid-back approach to dealing with our leaves. In certain beds, we rake the leaves away but much of what falls stays on the ground to break down in place, the way things work in the wild. Of course, we are a 22-acre woodland garden with an emphasis on letting things look wild. As with many things in the garden, there is not one universally correct way of dealing with leaves. Figure what works for you, but always consider if you can put the leaves to good use before bagging them up to be taken away.



R. calendulaceum Species Profile by Jillian Demus

Flame azalea is a stunning deciduous rhododendron native to the southern Appalachians, found on grassy balds and sunny mountain slopes. Apparently, the name comes from early encounters of wild stands, the hillsides thought to be on fire due to the striking, bright blooms. The species name means orange colored, like calendula flowers. This species is quite rare in Pennsylvania and endangered in Ohio, but is relatively widespread and common in the southeast, occurring as far south as northern Georgia and central Alabama. They can be found from 600 to 6000 feet (180 to 1800 meters). Other azaleas intermingling with flame azalea in the wild include *R. cumberlandense*, *R. arborescens*, *R. vaseyi* and *R. viscosum*. (Check out this [awesome source](#) to visit these in the wild)

Gorgeous pale yellow, orange to rich scarlet flowers with various fiery blotches emerge in terminal clusters in late spring to early summer before or with the light green leaves. Flowers are funnel shaped and in energetic trusses of 5-10. They exhibit golden yellow to red leaf color in autumn! Growing 6-12 feet by 6-12 feet (1.8-3.6 meters), this is one of the easiest azaleas to grow in full sun in the Pacific Northwest. They prefer dappled shade in more extreme climates. Like many rhododendrons, these like organic, acidic, and well-draining soils.

This vibrant azalea is tolerant of rabbit munching and attracts butterflies, hummingbirds, and other birds. Interesting research done at the University of North Carolina show that butterflies are the most effective pollinators of the flame azalea with the pollination rate exceeding that of bees and flies by tenfold. Like most deciduous azaleas, the stigma and anthers protrude far past the flower tube. Researchers found that more pollen was actually on the large wings of the butterflies and that these actually touch both the anthers and stigma during pollination. They found that the eastern tiger swallowtail and the great spangled fritillary were frequent visitors. The eastern tiger swallowtail turned out to be the more efficient pollinator because they flap their wings more when visiting these lively blooms. I am sure we will see more research of wing pollination, unlike previous thinking that insects mainly carry pollen on their bodies.

In the wild, *R. calendulaceum* exhibits high variation and it can be very difficult to distinguish any definitive forms. It seems as if each individual is unique in flower color. They differ in seed shape and habit as well, as opposed to other species, like *R. maximum*, that may have an entire hillside of more or less indistinguishable individuals. The RSBG cultivates and propagates many different clones of flame



Above: *R. calendulaceum* in the wild in the Southern Appalachians. Photo courtesy of Don Hyatt.



Above Left and Right: Different colorations of *R. calendulaceum*



azalea. Our friend Don Hyatt collected many forms from Hooper Bald in North Carolina as well as other locations in that region. He and the Middle Atlantic American Rhododendron Society Chapter are doing a lot of work to preserve distinct forms of this species as well as their habitats. They drew attention to 'Best Red' as it has large, bright red flowers and red fall foliage, known as the best red ever seen in this species! Another form on Hooper Bald is 'Hooper's Copper' with huge blossoms, bright gold to deep copper-orange. One other from Hooper Bald that we sell as seedlot #228sd2016 has large orange flowers with a yellow blotch called 'Hooper Pumpkin.' The RSBG collection also features a few classic, selected forms including 1976/291, collected by Henry Skinner, with very showy, huge red-orange flowers. Another special clone is 1981/076, from Biltmore Estate with handsome, deep

"This vibrant azalea is tolerant of rabbit munching and attracts butterflies, hummingbirds, and other birds."

orange flowers. The accession 1977/650, a selection from George Ring has bright, pure orange flowers.

In the Fall Catalog this year, we have the following available for sale, all grown from seed collected in the wild by Don Hyatt. Seedlot #228sd2016 collected from a plant exhibiting deep red flowers and notable fall color called 'Hooper 2nd Best Red'. 'Duke Rankin', 108sd2015, collected from a plant with a large showy inflorescence of orange with a yellow blotch. Another one from Hooper Bald was collected from a plant called 'Hooper Salmon Pink' with unique salmon colored flowers (225sd2016). Obviously, this magnificent species provides the gardener with a huge range of colors to brighten any space!

Highlights from the Fall Catalog by Atsuko Gibson

Fall distribution is in full swing! We ship every Monday between Sept. 21st to Nov. 9th, which is twice as much compared to normal fall shipping. We are getting more orders than usual this fall, most likely due to the pandemic. Thank you to everyone for supporting the RSBG! A few of the listings are sold out already, but there are plenty of goodies left, and here are some of my favorites from the catalog.

R. pingianum—A picture says a thousand words. Each truss consists of 20+ flowers that are a clear pink color—it's not reddish pink or purplish pink—without any spot or markings on the petals. It is very floriferous and puts on a stunning show every year. It's best grown in afternoon shade, partial shade, or in a woodland setting. Once you see it bloom, you will fall in love with this plant. It is well worthy of a space in your garden.



Lysionotus petelotii YUGU#049—From our own Steve Hootman's collection from the China/Vietnam border, these bloomed for the first time this summer. Their 2.5 inch long flowers are a lovely soft lemon-yellow color with a reddish calyx! They are a very showy and worthy addition to your gesneriad (African Violet relatives) collection. They can be grown indoors in a bright window, away from direct sun. Many of our seedlings are showing some variegation on the foliage, but this may be the juvenile form as Steve recalls no variegation on the plants from which the seeds were collected. These are the most stunning *Lysionotus* I've ever seen. (Note: This is listed as *Lysionotus* sp. in the catalog but we have since identified them as *L. petelotii*.)



Viburnum furcatum—This is a deciduous shrub from Japan. I've seen this plant in the wild growing alongside *R. quinquefolium*. This plant has all season interest. It has very showy, Hydrangea-like white flowers in spring followed by bright red fruits in summer, but one of the best features comes in the fall. The leaves take on scarlet to reddish purple shades. This is the most showy and ornamental *Viburnum* in my opinion. They are very easy to please in full sun or light shade. You can find the big specimens in Magnolia grove here at the garden.



Online Plant Ordering

If you live locally, pick-up option is available. Also we have been stocking the Visitor Center nursery with rare materials with plants we don't normally offer (vireyas, house plants, and tender stock plants), so be sure to stop by.

Online Ordering is here!

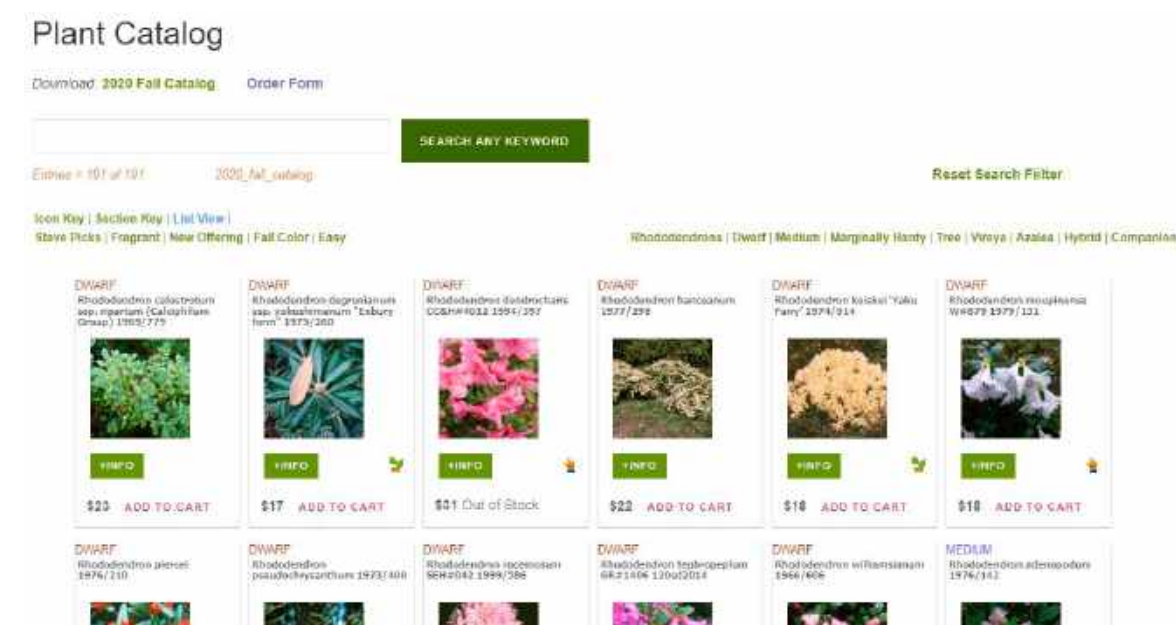
-Visit <https://rhodygarden.org/plant-catalog/>

-Browse the catalog, which includes all of the same helpful information provided in the original catalog, plus photos.

-Add plants to your cart.

-Pay for your plants and shipping.

We'll do the rest!



Internship Overview by Colette Lambert

I am originally from Western Washington and was raised in a family of avid farmers and gardeners. Throughout my early schooling I was always drawn to biology and the mechanics of how natural processes shape living things. With this in mind, it was a natural progression to study Botany when I attended college at Oregon State University in Corvallis, Oregon. Oregon State provided me with fantastic opportunities to be involved with plant science while studying topics ranging from biochemistry and plant physiology to pollination and plant pathology. My favorite topics of study included plant structure, photosynthesis, and genetics; understanding the microscopic structure of plant tissues gives a deep appreciation for the range of forms and adaptations plants have taken over millions of years of evolution. The transformation over generations from non-vascular bryophyte ancestors to modern dicot is almost unfathomable to the human mind, but even the humblest weed is amazing to witness when this fact is kept in mind. As I see it, horticulture is the application and manipulation of this knowledge in the real world. Overarching topics of plant care such as drainage and light requirements are observable manifestations of evolutionary adaptations a species has gained over time to optimize its fitness in relation to its native environment. Our challenge as horticulturists is to recreate this environment and keep these plants alive in sometimes inhospitable conditions.

I began my internship here at the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden in late September of 2019 a few weeks after I had completed all my coursework in Oregon. Although a typical internship has only a three-month duration, I wanted to spend a calendar year at the garden to truly understand the annual rotation of both the garden and nursery. The first few weeks of my internship I saw the tail end of the work I am doing now, as I am writing this in the last weeks of September, which is hand weeding in the garden, moving the first batches of cuttings that have rooted into band pots, and moving nursery plants into bigger pots to support their growth. My work later in the fall consisted primarily of preparing the nursery for winter weather; placing a plastic sheet cover over the hoop houses to insulate and protect from excessive rain, moving plants out of the propagation house and into the hoops while the nightly temperatures are still mild, and autumnal tidying of the garden such as raking *Magnolia sprengeri* and *Acer macrophyllum* leaves after they have run the course of their fall color. Other seasonal tasks were accomplished among these larger objectives such as grafting wild collected Rhododendron scions onto rootstocks, replacing soil in the conservatory that had decomposed over time, keying out plants



Above: Intern Colette Lambert
Below: Gingko tree photo by Colette



Internship Overview continued...

from Steve's 2019 trip to China, and preparing materials for sowing Rhododendron seeds later in the winter.

The cooler weather and frequent rain of the winter months equates to planting season in the garden; this past winter we were able to plant many new and exciting beds that will only get progressively more enjoyable as the plants fill in and thrive in their new locations. Misty cool mornings provided the ideal conditions for important maintenance of the glass enclosing the Ruhtherford Conservatory, essential for maintaining healthy photosynthesis for the plants within. Another main project over the winter months was seed sowing; rhododendron seeds must be cleaned before being sprinkled over sterile sphagnum moss and placed in a warm, humid, bright environment. While many species germinated in as little as three weeks, others required much more time. This staggering of germination resulted in a long season of delicately moving seedlings from the small three-inch pots of sphagnum into shallow trays of soil. At this stage of the plant's life cycle all tissues from the roots to the shoots are extremely tender and require gentle handling. Although the process is slow and can be slightly arduous, the phenotypic diversity that reveals itself shortly after transplant is well worth the toil. Many other genera of seeds were also sowed, including but not limited to Haemanthus, Schefflera, and Podophyllum.

Garden maintenance is an ever-present task and with cooler weather comes dormancy and the die-back of deciduous plants. Cutting back fern fronds for example gives garden beds a fresh clean look while not presenting them as overly manicured. Removing dead plant material also makes room for delicate early spring blooms such as *Erythronium revolutum* to be fully visible. As the surrounding scenery is full of grey and brown, the vireya house provided a much needed splash of color; these blooms also provided the opportunity to answer questions regarding identification of individual specimens. I find keying out plants to be great for familiarizing oneself with both taxonomy and plant structure, not to mention vocabulary.

Coming into the early days of spring, the garden began to pop into color; every morning walk revealed a new plant dripping in colorful inflorescences. With all of the color and grandeur of a good spring bloom it is easy to forget the opportunity this time of year provides: controlled crosses. Plant hybridization and reproduction is a particular interest of mine, so I was thrilled to have the opportunity to assist with controlled crosses to produce both species and hybrids. But every coin has two sides; with blooming comes deadheading. Removing the spent flower inflorescence is key in preventing the plant from investing unnecessary energy into producing seed that is not desired. It also causes the plant to overcompensate for this lack of successful reproduction by increasing the number of flowers the following season. With all this activity in the garden, the nursery was still bustling. Spring orders had to be organized and packed for shipping, a process I enjoy. It is always interesting to see the order's destination, as well as the selection a gardener chooses. It is easy for your imagination to take over and start picturing the planting arrangement the customer might be envisioning. In the propagation house, seedlings sown in winter and moved into shallow flats of soil mix were outgrowing their conditions; the soil mix breaks down quickly in the hot, humid conditions and at a certain size the roots of the seedlings become nearly impossible to untangle from each other. One by one they must be placed into band pots where they will grow from anywhere to nine months to a few years, depending on the species.

Internship Overview continued...

The summer months were when things truly began to feel full circle; cutting season began, and I had spent the first few weeks of my internship moving rooted cuttings from their substrate into bands of soil mix. Every week cuttings are collected from all around the garden and nursery, trimmed back to reduce transpiration, given a fresh cut along the stem with a razor blade, dipped in hormone, and placed into substrate until they have a stable enough root system for transplanting. Alongside Jillian, the RSBG horticultural assistant, and with Atsuko, Assistant Curator, collecting cuttings from the garden we were able to process up to 980 individual cuttings a day, our record for the summer. I found it intriguing to see the range of colors, textures, and sizes of all the different species we handled. Once the cuttings are lined up in neat little rows, the variance in structure is remarkable. The remainder of my work week was filled with weeding in the garden, staying on top of moving plants from bands into larger pots, keying plants alongside the horticultural staff, and watering. Coming into September I feel the most overlap with the beginning of my time in the garden. Fruit of *Paeonia rockii*, which I collected on one of my first days of work last year, are mature again and the *Franklinia alatamaha* is just coming into bloom in the Azalea garden; on one of my first walks the two trees were hard to miss with their big pearly white flowers against the bright red fall color of their foliage. The fluorescent pink fruit of the Magnolia trees around the garden are beginning to swell and all kinds of mushrooms are popping up along the paths, an unmistakable harbinger of fall. These last few weeks of my time here feel the most familiar as I observe the patterns and habits of the plants I had come to know during my year at the RSBG.

The skills and knowledge I acquired over the past year will be with me my whole life and I hope to put them to good use in my future endeavors. I am deeply grateful for the opportunity RSF provided to me and to all the wonderful people I worked alongside. Special thanks to Jillian Demus, Atsuko Gibson, Will Clausen, and of course Steve Hootman for the depth of knowledge they made accessible and the patience with my questions. The Rhododendron Garden will always be a special place to me and I look forward to seeing it grow and advance in the coming years.



Above: *Paeonia rockii*

Nursery Spotlights!

Due to the pandemic, the RSBG made the decision to cancel our multi-vendor Fall Plant Sale. The RSBG will host an in-house plant sale instead on October 17 and 18.

Not only do we enjoy the company and camaraderie of spending the weekend with fellow nurseries, but these businesses also make the shopping experience extra special for visitors. These nurseries are the best of the Pacific Northwest, each specializing in different types of plants and all of them very willing to take the time to talk to shoppers about their own gardens. This makes for a very individualized and educational event.

Though we cannot gather, we are excited to feature some of our friends here in the newsletter. Please see below for current offerings, hours, and information about these beloved plant purveyors. We hope that you'll support these exceptional local nurseries.

ARBUTUS GARDENS

Arbutus Garden Arts is open for visitors to our display garden and nursery by appointment only, or visit www.arbutusgarden.com for our current availability for shipping or curbside pickup. We specialize in Japanese maples, dwarf conifers, and Epimedium along with a selection of our favorite plants for mixed borders and woodland gardens.

<https://www.arbutusgarden.com/>



CHIMACUM WOODS

Chimacum Woods is open daily by appointment. Masks and social distancing are required and we are happy to welcome you to the garden. Bob or Beth are happy to show you the plants

for sale. Lots of wonderful rhododendron species are available, most in two-gallon containers, some larger. Since we only admit one party at a time, you will have both garden and sales area to yourself. We specialize in rare and hard-to-find species rhododendrons which show off the genus with interesting leaf-shape, trunk, structure, and other characteristics. We're on the beautiful Olympic Peninsula just a few miles west of the Hood Canal Bridge at 2722 Thorndyke Road, Port Ludlow

www.chimacumwoods.com



Nursery Spotlights continued...

WINDCLIFF PLANTS

Windcliff Plants is a small endeavor on our property that has the luxury of propagating only those plants that we feel deserve greater recognition in gardens of North America; you will not find filler or bread and butter crops in this listing. But for few exceptions, the entirety of our inventory is part of my own collection work with their provenance and collection numbers in the plant description or provided upon request. Open by appointment only.

www.danieljhinkley.com

EARTH GROWN CREATIONS

Earth Grown Creations is a private local grower/nursery offering locally propagated and grown plants suited to this area. Please visit EarthGrownCreations.com for a current inventory list. To order, contact us at EarthGrownCreationsLLC@gmail.com or by phone 360-633-5893 to set up a pickup time.

We are a small family owned and operated backyard grower in Port Orchard, Washington. Our goal is to bring the best quality plants, suited to our area, direct to the local community. We specialize in Rhododendrons, Camellias, Daylilies, ornamental shrubs and grasses, perennial flowers, and various sweet and savory herbs.

www.EarthGrownCreations.com



Leonine Iris

Leonine Iris, Specializing in Pacific Coast Iris, is closed to the public, however we will be offering curbside pickup for freshly potted divisions. Leonine Iris' ultimate goal is to create a living archive to preserve as many of the older Pacific Coast Iris hybrids as possible. They currently grow over 350 named PCI hybrids, along with many as yet unregistered seedlings, and are constantly seeking to expand the collection. Embodying the luminescence of the rainbow, irises add prismatic brilliance to any landscape and bring joy to the heart.

www.leonineiris.com

RSF Executive Committee and Board

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1st Vice President: Ian Walker
2nd Vice President: Charles Muller
Treasurer: Robert Gust
Secretary: Garratt Richardson
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Garratt Richardson
Joseph Ronsley
Charles Sale & Margaret Charlton
Hartwig Schepker



Don Smart
Valerie Soza
John Stephens
Mike Stewart
Diane Thompson
Paul Thompson
Ian Walker
Tim Walsh
Garth Wedemire
Keith White
Martin Wilkie

Virtual RSF Annual Meeting

When: Saturday, November 21
at 10:00 am

Join us for a Zoom Board Meeting.
Stay tuned for info on meeting topics
and how to access the meeting.

Endowment Gifts

Anonymous
Marilyn Lamont
Norris-Rugel Charitable Trust

Extraordinary Gifts

Marilyn Lamont

General Operations

AmazonSmile Foundation	Hultin, Elizabeth
ARS	Isackson, Clarke
ARS Cal Chapter	Lamont, Marilyn
ARS Greater Philadelphia	Nemanishen, Gerald
Barry, Robert J.	Niihara, Shuichi
Bluhm, Wilbur	The Benevity Community Impact Fund
Boatwright, Mary	Sanchez, Sean
Buhler, Joan	Wall, Carol
Davies, Dr. S.E.	White, Dr. Keith A.
Eiberg, Hans	Winslow, William
Enticknap, Ruth	
Foltz, Leonard	
Graves, Shirley	
Groppenberger, Jane	
Harris, Julie	

Spring Drive Matching Fund Seed Donors

Deena J. Henkins
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Spring Drive Supporters

ARS North Island Rh. Soc.	Mauritz, Sara
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Bartlett, Robert A. Jr.	McCormick, Stephen
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Blanchard, Margaret	McIntosh, Kevin
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Buchholz & Buchholz Nursery	Morel, David R.
Butler, Don	Nelson, Margaret & Allen
Chapen, Carol F.	Okazaki, Eileen
Christianson, Neil B.	Olsen, Sue
Clark, A. Clarice	Parker, John
Clark, Susan	Portland Garden Club
Davis, Laurel	Ray, Nan E.
de Burlo, C. Russell	Saarilahti, Hannu
Dunning, Robert A.	Sale, Charles
Farbarik, John J.	Selcer, Donald
Goetsch, Loretta A.	Smith, Beverly
Gray, Laura	Smith, Canfield
Groendyke, Mollie	Smith, Paul A.
Hayton, Mary	Smith, Rex and Jeanine
Hiltz, Jackie	Soule, Ramona
Hunter, Freelon	Stowell, Scott
Kellerman, Carole	Swenson, Karen
Kessler, Dan	Thompson, Diane and Paul
Klein, Constance	Tidball, Claudia
Lamont, Marilyn	Traver, Dj
Lintault, Katherine	Wichlens, Jill

Grants

4Culture - Cultural Relief Grant