New Plantings in the Arboretum

One of the pleasures of the winter season for me is reflecting on the previous year and sharing some of the new plants and plantings that we’ve added to the Arboretum. Along with individual plantings throughout the collection, we once again completed many larger projects and started others. Upon Fred Hoyt’s retirement as UW Botanic Gardens director in February 2021, I served as interim director until late summer, which meant I wasn’t able to devote as much time to curatorial projects as planned. Nonetheless, it was still a year of interesting additions and enhancements. The Arboretum continued to maintain the same record-high attendance that began back in 2020, and it has been gratifying to hear the many comments from visitors about how they’re enjoying and appreciating the gardens.

**Rhododendron Glen**

In Rhododendron Glen, planting slowed somewhat compared to the last two years, as recently renovated areas were cared for and maintained and new areas were prepared for planting over the coming winter and spring. The record heat of June, combined with the dry spring and summer, meant extra time watering and protecting the hundreds of young plants as they established and grew. There were some losses—but thanks to diligent staff attention, less than had been feared. Some plants flowered for the first time, and others started to show more of their future form.
Along the creek in the Glen, we planted new specimens of that cheerful spring ephemeral, *Cardamine quinquefolia* among several examples of wild-collected *Liriope platyphylla* (syn. *L. muscari*). This cardamine species is a perennial from Asia Minor with relatively large, light–purple flowers in early spring. It spreads slowly to moderately (but not by seed) and is easily checked. The deeply lobed green foliage disappears by late spring. We planted it among a larger–than–typical liriope, or lily–turf, installed partially in an effort to discourage visitors from stepping into the rockery along the creek. The *Liriope platyphylla* was donated by Dan Hinkley from his collections in Hubei Province, China. It produces relatively wide, evergreen foliage up to two feet tall, as well as white spring flowers on three–foot stems, followed by blue–black fruits. We hope it helps discourage foot traffic off the trail in addition to being attractive.

Two new trees were also planted in the vicinity. East of the dawn redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*) grove, we planted *Pterostyrax psilophyllus* var. *leveillei*, a styrax (or snowbell) relative from China. Collected by Far Reaches Farm in Guizhou Province, this small– to medium–sized tree features attractive, three–lobed deciduous leaves—in contrast to the typical species, which bears “entire” or unlobed leaves. However, the plant’s best feature is its foot–long panicles of white flowers, which cover the tree in spring. Our specimen is already four feet tall, and we look forward to many years of increasingly showy spring flowering displays. It should enjoy the dappled sunlight and protection of the upper Glen.

A bit south of the dawn redwoods—along the short, informal trail leading into the Camellia Collection—a new *Stewartia* species expanded the breadth of our collection of this genus. *Stewartia pteropetiolata* is native to northern Vietnam and Yunnan Province, in China. Also grown from seed collected in the wild by Far Reaches, the tree should benefit from a somewhat sheltered spot. In spring, new leaves emerge with reddish tones that fade to green. In late spring, small, white, camellia–like flowers appear. We hope to plant several other examples of the species in future years to see where it performs best.

Just north of the dawn redwood grove, among some larger–leaved rhododendrons planted last year on the south side of the creek, we added another example from the Ericaceae, or heather family: *Vaccinium aff. brevipedicellatum*. This is a new species for us, grown from seed collected by Dan Hinkley in the mountains of northern Vietnam. An evergreen species, it has the appearance—at least so far—of being a more robust version of our native evergreen huckleberry, *Vaccinium ovatum*. In the wild it can grow fairly large but, planted in the Glen among the towering dawn redwoods and black bamboo, it should prove less vigorous. If it doesn’t and wants to spread out, then the shrub will have plenty of room to do so between the creek and the other plants.
On the opposite bank, on the north side of the trail that parallels the creek, we planted another Dan Hinkley collection from northern Vietnam, the climbing hydrangea relative *Schizophragma molle*. Planted near the base of a 30-foot cedar snag, it will—we hope—happily clamber skyward in time. Like other *Schizophragma*, this species features large, tear-shaped sepals in lacecap hydrangea-like flowerheads during the summer. The sepals are cream-colored and abundantly produced if the plant is provided with summer water and good garden soil.

In the upper part of Rhododendron Glen, we cleared more areas of invasives—such as bindweed—and planted many infill perennials among the woody specimens installed over the last few years. In addition to species of *Polygonatum* and *Maianthemum*, these include several *Cardiocrinum giganteum* (giant Himalayan lily) in among the shrubs and perennials in the bed south of the large stair at the head of the Glen. We’ve had a large and healthy patch of these in the China Entry Garden in Pacific Connections over the last decade. Their immense, fragrant blooms appear on five- to eight-foot-tall stalks in that relatively sunny garden, and we hope they will be as happy—and perhaps grow even taller—in the shadier conditions of the Glen. If we can keep the slugs at bay, the lilies should bloom and seed around the vicinity in the next few years. We’ll be trying them in a few locations in the Glen as the garden is further developed.

**New Zealand Forest**

The most noticeable work in the Pacific Connections Garden in the past year was in the New Zealand Forest. Here we set about trying some new things to improve the long-term success of the many sweeps of hebes (*Veronica* species) in the garden, some of which have declined noticeably in wetter and more crowded spots since their 2013 installation. Hebes generally thrive in soils that are well-drained, even gravelly, but these are in short supply in much of the Forest. We decided to try adding areas of well-draining soils in berms and spacing out plantings to see if that would improve their long-term success.

Several areas were renovated, with noticeable changes in the silver beech forest area, west of the central trail that leads down the slope from the New Zealand Entry Garden. During construction in 2012–13, the first seating bench at the top of the slope was re-oriented from its original design position facing the trail (east) to one that took advantage of the view of the landscape to the north. While this directed viewers to a lovely vista that takes in the Lookout Gazebo and all the scenery beyond, the planting plan was never modified accordingly. In the intervening years, the dozen *Veronica salicifolia* specimens planted to the north of the bench grew very large, soon overwhelming neighboring plants and completely blocking the seated view. A mass planting of smaller *Veronica subalpina* also responded poorly to the relatively poorly drained, clay soils.

To solve the problem, we removed the *Veronica salicifolia* (plenty of it remains elsewhere in the Forest) and created a large berm of freely draining soil. We added lower-growing *Veronica subalpina* and *V. cypressoides* (cypress hebe), along with two examples of silver beech (*Nothofagus menziesii*) and a sweep of an *Astelia*...
species collected from seed in New Zealand. The textures of the species contrast pleasantly and, despite the attention of some hungry rabbits, the plants are so far responding well. The view has also been restored to this popular sitting spot.

Farther down the path, as the landscape changes from Silver Beech Forest to the Hebe Meadow, additional berms were added where previously installed hebes had declined or died. The berms offer textural relief and aid drainage, and we planted them with the hebes previously mentioned—as well as the finely textured, blue-leaved Veronica pimeleoides var. glaucocaerulea, V. adora ‘New Zealand Gold’, and V. cupressoides ‘Nana’.

Down the path, just before it dips into the footprint of the future China Forest, additional renovations occurred using the same species and increased spacing. Further sweeps of Veronica cupressoides ‘Nana’ were added, along with V. subalpina. Following the path as it leads to the Phormium Fen and Lookout Gazebo, two additional sweeps of V. subalpina replaced crowded and declining examples from 2013. We are very interested to see how the changes play out.

Expanded Australia Entry Garden
Elsewhere in the Pacific Connections Garden, further additions were made at the vehicle turnaround on Arboretum Drive and adjacent to the Australia Entry Garden. Here, we planted additional Eucalyptus species in the future Australia Forest footprint. Two Eucalyptus pauciflora ssp. niphophila (snow gum) and one E. perriniana (spinning gum) were planted east of last year’s eucalyptus plantings. These trees, smaller-growing than many eucalyptus species, have attractive bark typical of the genus and hail from the highest elevations of southeast Australia. They were planted in sunny spots and augmented with evergreen shrubs native to that region.

The shrubs include three Grevillea victoriae (royal grevillea), whose orange-red flowers will surely delight the local Anna’s Hummingbirds when they bloom through the winter months. We also added three examples of Lomatia myricoides (river lomatia), which bears narrow, serrated, blue-green leaves and sweetly fragrant clouds of ivory-colored summer flowers. Two large specimens of this plant, dating to 1990, grow just to the north of the turnaround along Arboretum Drive, and each July they are covered by bees enjoying the nectar-rich blooms. The new specimens in the Australia Forest footprint will also grow into large shrubs.

Two Hakea microcarpa (small-fruited hakea) were also added. This shrub can reach six feet tall and is often called the plant that “cast no shade,” due to its very fine, needle-like and somewhat sparse evergreen foliage. It blooms in spring, featuring white, rather fine, curled flowers in abundance. The leaves are blue-green and can become a bit pokey as the plant ages. Grevillea, Lomatia and Hakea are members of the family Proteaceae, and so are sensitive to phosphorous levels in the soil. This can make them tricky to establish in the garden, but they are well worth the effort for their unusual textures and flowers.

We were also happy to receive a large example of Wollemia nobilis (Wollemi pine) this April. Mrs. Gail Andrews of Corvallis, Oregon contacted me last year about donating a sizable nine-foot-tall specimen from her and her husband’s garden. Due to pandemic constraints, getting the tree took some time. But we were able to arrange
transport via Mark Leichty of Little Prince Nursery in Albany, Oregon, with an assist from Richie Steffen of the Elisabeth Miller Botanical Garden. This impressive specimen has been planted between Arboretum Drive and the metal screen in the expanded Australia Entry Garden. It has settled in well, close to the smaller specimen of Wollemi pine that we transplanted to this bed last year. We are very grateful for the collaboration between local horticulturists and gardeners in helping us plant this in a fine setting in the Arboretum!

Cascadia & China Forests
The Cascadia Forest received mostly infill plantings of previously established species. And work continued to make way for some of the fruits of the 2019 joint UW Botanic Gardens—Heronswood—Kruckeberg collections that are now nearly of size to plant out. Stay tuned for exciting additions in the coming year...

In China, we added additional examples of *Clethra kaipoensis* and *Deutzia longiflora*, described in last year’s review article. However, one of the year’s most exciting additions occurred in the section of the future China Forest along the Arboretum Loop Trail. At the intersection of the Loop Trail and the service path across from the Japanese Garden, we installed a fine example of *Carpinus fangiana* (monkeytail hornbeam) among previous plantings. This tree, received from Far Reaches Farm, features the deeply veined foliage typical of hornbeams but its leaves are longer. However, the main attraction is the large, pendulous fruit clusters that follow the flowers. These cover the tree in summer and reach up to 19 inches long. In the wild in central and western China, the tree can reach up to 60 feet tall, but in cultivation it has been much more restrained thus far. We hope our specimen thrives among the other plants in this area, which are native to Emei Shan in Sichuan Province.

Witch Hazel Family Collection Expansion
One of the more noticeable changes in the Arboretum built on last year’s work in the new Witch Hazel Family Collection area, just to the northeast of the Witt Winter Garden. The original Witch Hazel Family collection area lies within the footprint of the future Australia Forest, and a number of those specimens were moved or re-propagated during the first phases of the construction of the Pacific Connection Garden. Some were relocated north of the Winter Garden to a shadier space that’s now become more crowded, with the result that there is little room for new additions. Besides, many of the Hamamelidaceae prefer sunnier conditions to showcase their best features.

The new collection area to the northeast of the Winter Garden is a relatively open hillside. Last year saw the addition of several witch-hazel cultivars, while this year we planted a more diverse array of witch-hazel family members. Though these specimens are small now, they should develop into a fine display of some of the family’s more ornamental and unusual genera in the coming years.

For foliage effects, few plants in the Arboretum can compare with *Exbucklandia tonkinensis*. This species with an unwieldy name was grown from seed collected in the wild in northern Vietnam. Where native, it grows rapidly and is used as a timber tree. In horticulture, it is prized for its distinctive, glossy leaves, which are broadly ovate to palmately lobed and feature bronzy-brown coloration when young. The pale, strap-like yellow flowers, produced in spring, give it away as a member of the witch-hazel family, but the real draw is the foliage. I’ve been somewhat hesitant to plant it out, because it is rather tender and needs some protection from winter winds. We’ve been using our specimen as an attractive summer container plant on the Graham Visitors Center patio these past few years, and it has put on good growth. After seeing the species growing for a few years out in the light woodland at Heronswood—and surviving
the colder winter of 2019—I finally decided to go ahead and “take the plunge.” Once established, the tree should re-sprout from the roots if badly damaged by a cold winter.

Another example of the relatively newly cultivated species Disanthus ovatifolius was also added to the collection area. We planted a specimen of this evergreen tree by the lower Woodland Garden pond last year and plan on trying it in a few different spots. (See Dan Hinkley’s profile of the species in the Fall 2020 issue of the “Bulletin.”)

One of my favorite underused garden plants is Parrotiopsis jacquemontiana, and we’ve added two new ones to this area. It combines the foliage attributes of the similar-looking Parrotia persica (hence the species name) with flowers that resemble those of fothergilla and flowering dogwood. The early-spring blossoms are a delight, with the filamentous flowers subtended by large white bracts. Leaves are a glossy green, and the small tree’s compact size makes it suitable for smaller gardens. (See John Wott’s profile of Parrotiopsis in the Spring 2017 issue of the “Bulletin.”)

Nearby are two new Sycopsis sinensis (Chinese fighazel), another fascinating member of the witch-hazel family. An attractive but underused broadleaf evergreen shrub, Chinese fighazel bears clusters of showy, finely textured, apetalous yellow flowers in late winter. What makes the flowers unique are their long, dark-red anthers, which set off the yellow color of the bracts and stamen filaments with stunning effect. Chinese fighazel is a useful shrub, tolerant of a variety of conditions and happy when planted in either sun or partial shade in the Northwest. Over time, it has the potential to develop into a small tree, as evidenced by the large cluster of tree-size Sycopsis sinensis from 1940 growing along Arboretum Drive, in between the Australia Entry Garden and the expanded Australia Entry Garden.

Planted by the new Chinese fighazels is a specimen of × Sycoparrotia semidecidua, an intergeneric hybrid between Sycopsis sinensis and Parrotia persica (Persian ironwood). Besides being fun to pronounce, this plant demonstrates ornamental characteristics of both its parents. The species epithet is apt because it describes the plant’s not-quite-evergreen-or-deciduous nature. The flowers are reminiscent of those of both parents (Persian ironwood also bears apetalous flowers with red anthers), though more large and showy like Sycopsis sinensis. Besides being a taxonomic conversation starter, it is a useful, hardy small tree, growing up to 15 feet tall. Another winning quality is the bark, which becomes more ornamental with age, just like that of its Persian ironwood parent. At maturity, the bark of × Sycoparrotia semidecidua flakes off in attractive plates of tan, gray and cream. A mature specimen (accession 52–72–A) near the Sycopsis grove at the Australia Entry Garden showcases this beautiful feature.

Rounding out the new witch-hazel family display are two other fine plants. The first is a new species of winter hazel for us, Corylopsis coreana, featuring the attractive, pendulous, yellow winter flowers so typical of the genus. The second is a

As a groundcover at the top of the slope, adjacent to the northeast edge of the Winter Garden, we have added several different varieties of hellebores. These are part of a large donation of more than 50 plants by Heuger Horticultural Companies of Glandorf, Germany. Heuger has been breeding hellebores for many years, and some of their introductions include the popular Helleborus Gold Collection of intraspecific hellebores. These seek to combine the best features of many species and varieties of hellebores—from attractive, durable foliage to flower color. We received 20 different cultivars to trial as part of the donation.

Several were planted in the bed with *Hamamelis × intermedia* ‘Birgit’ and ‘Purpurea’, located along the path between the Winter Garden and the south edge of the Witch Hazel Family Collection expansion area. Most were planted in a new display along the east side Arboretum Drive, just south of the Graham Visitors Center. We planted these vibrantly colored winter–blooming perennials in groups among existing ornamental grasses, backed by specimens of *Viburnum setigerum* (tea viburnum). The flowers range in color from white to pink to burgundy and slate purple, with some examples of picotee (white–edged in pink). We are excited to see how these perform and grateful to Heuger for the donation.

**Puget Sound Rhododendron Hybrid Garden**

After several years of planning, work began in earnest on a renovation of the Puget Sound Rhododendron Hybrid Garden. This display, first installed in the early part of this century, was in need of reinvigoration and soil improvements. Like in much of the Arboretum, the site has wet, heavy soils that are not ideal for sustaining rhododendrons. We added many yards of grittier soil medium, which should improve drainage and result in better conditions for this shallow–rooted group of plants.

Thanks to the generosity of Arboretum Foundation Unit 26, we were able to undertake the soil improvements and purchase dozens of new cultivars that showcase some of the impressive hybrids developed by Puget Sound rhododendron enthusiasts over the last 80 years. The garden is grouped into the “Early Era” (1940s–60s), “Middle Era” (70s–80s), and “Contemporary Era” (1990s and beyond) of hybridization in the region. Signs highlighting these beds, their location in the garden, and the developments of each era were installed in 2019. After much work in sourcing and procuring hybrids not previously grown in the Arboretum, as well as some replacements, we began planting the Contemporary and Early Era beds in late spring.

In the Early Era beds, we added examples of *Rhododendron* ‘Lucy Lou’ and ‘Hello Dolly’. ‘Lucy Lou’ is a compact grower and an early bloomer, usually flowering in early March. Developed by Hjalmar L. Larson (no relation) and registered in 1958, it grows up to three feet tall and wide, bears snow–white blossoms, and does well in brighter conditions. Unlike another early bloomer with *Rhododendron ciliatum* parentage, *Rhododendron* ‘Cilipense’, ‘Lucy Lou’ is resistant to the disfiguring effects of azalea lace bug. *Rhododendron* ‘Hello Dolly’ was developed by another prominent early breeder, Halfdan Lem. This is a medium–sized...
grower, with large, colorful flowers in shades of pink and light yellow.

In the Contemporary Era beds, we added new plants showcasing some of the work of Frank Fujioka and Jim Barlup. *Rhododendron ‘Pomegranate Splash’* was planted along the upper path dividing the Dan Hinkley Asian Maple Collection from the Rhododendron Hybrid Garden. This cultivar features pale-purple flowers with dark-red margins. *Rhododendron ‘Burgundy Lace’* has dark-red flowers with bright-purple edges and cream centers. We planted this along the main north–south path separating the Contemporary and Early Era beds. Both cultivars are medium growers and were developed by Frank Fujioka of Whidbey Island. We installed three specimens of each.

Three plants of *Rhododendron ‘Honey Butter’* were added along the south side of the path dividing the Contemporary Era from the Middle Era. This is a compact-growing cultivar reaching four feet tall and wide. It features yellow-orange flowers with pink midribs and was developed by Jim Barlup of Bellevue.

Longtime volunteer Stuart DeOme has been a dedicated steward of this garden, and we would not have been able to make these improvements without his contributions. We will continue planting through the winter and spring, focusing next on the Middle Era beds. Be sure to look for many new additions next time you visit. Spring 2022 promises quite a show!

**Individual Plantings Around the Arboretum**

Along with larger plantings, we added individual specimens to the garden and collection areas. In the main Camellia Collection area, we planted a large example of *Franklinia alatamaha* (Franklin tree). This late-summer and fall-blooming camellia relative complements the existing specimens a bit farther south along the drive and is backed by a large grouping of mature hydrangeas.

In the Viburnum collection area, new plantings included *Viburnum furcatum*, a new species for us. Native to Japan, Korea, and islands of southeast Russia, it features broad, rounded leaves that turn a lovely scarlet–red color in fall. Like many viburnums, it features white lacecap flowers followed by red fruits. The specimen was a gift from the Rhododendron Species Botanic Garden, where it has performed very well and attracted much comment for its large foliage.

In the Magnolia Collection, we added another new species for us, *Magnolia leveilleana*. This evergreen species is native to south central China. From a collection in Guizhou Province by Far Reaches Farm, it promises white, fragrant flowers in time. In the wild, the tree can reach 65 feet tall, but it should be much smaller in cultivation. Hardy to USDA Zone 8, it is a good example of how we are increasingly trying out species that up until recently may have been only marginally adapted to our climate.

These are just some of the many changes to be found in your Arboretum during the past year. I’m very thankful to the dedicated gardeners and volunteers who always do such a great job keeping the gardens looking good and helping our new plantings to establish themselves. I hope you enjoy seeing some of these enhancements the next time you visit, and I encourage you to visit often. These plantings would not be possible without your support. Thank you!

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**Ray Larson** is curator of Living Collections at the University of Washington Botanic Gardens and curator of the Otis Douglas Hyde Herbarium, the Arboretum’s herbarium housed in the Center for Urban Horticulture.