For most folks, this past year has presented challenges like no other in living memory. Not surprisingly, the resilience of the natural world and the serenity of gardens have provided us with welcome solace. It has been gratifying to see so many visitors to the Arboretum throughout the pandemic, experiencing what most of us have always valued about this special place: the beautiful landscapes, and the calming influence of seasonal change and the rhythms of nature.

The Arboretum has not been immune from the difficulties caused by the pandemic. Reductions in staff hours, especially during the early days of the shutdown, caused the delay and rethinking of many planting and maintenance projects. The restriction of volunteer activities also has been acutely felt. Even in the best of times, our limited staff rely on our tremendous volunteers to help keep the collections and planting beds looking good. The need for social distancing and other new safety measures has led to changes and adaptations in nearly all aspects of our work.
However, nature doesn’t wait, and plants and weeds continue to grow. Despite all the challenges, we’ve tried to maintain forward momentum and keep things looking as presentable as possible. The horticulturists and grounds staff have done a remarkable job, and I’m so appreciative of all their hard work.

This year hasn’t been as productive with new plantings as I’d anticipated at the outset, but there are still many exciting things to highlight and new specimens to view on your next visit.

**Rhododendron Glen: South Rim and Slope**

More than for any other project over the past year, new plantings have transformed the upper reaches of Rhododendron Glen. Thanks to generous funding from long-time Arboretum Foundation volunteer Mary Ellen Mulder and her husband, Gordon Mulder, a series of new plantings began in the fall of 2019 and continued with a steady pace through spring and fall of 2020.

Two large areas that had been nearly devoid of plantings in recent decades were planted early in the year. Along the main service road and trail at the south rim of the upper Glen—and a bit west of the mature dawn redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*) grove—the canopy had become so dense as to form a vegetative desert below, occupied only by invasive herb Robert (*Geranium robertianum*) and field bindweed (*Convolvulus arvensis*). Here, in 2019, we removed two cedars, limbed up two others, and began to diligently remove the invasives. Mature examples of mountain hemlock (*Tsuga mertensiana*) and magnolia species were suddenly visible and enjoying the added light. By early 2020, we were ready with a planting plan and a large palette of shrubs and small trees to fill the area.

We added a mix of larger rhododendrons, along with small deciduous trees, plus a few companion broadleaf evergreens and a handful of deciduous plants. Many of the plants were grown from seed of wild origin, including beautiful examples of *Rhododendron arizelum*, a species from Myanmar and China with cream-colored to pink flowers; the red-flowered *R. facetum*, also from Myanmar and China; and *R. fansipanensis*, a species from northern Vietnam with lavender and purple flowers.

We planted the vine *Schizophragma megalocarpum*, a hydrangea relative from Sichuan Province, China, at the base of a 30-foot cedar snag, so it can climb and bloom with its large, white, teardrop-shaped bracts in early summer. This is a new species for us, a gift to the Arboretum from Dan Hinkley.

Two deciduous, creamy-yellow-flowering *Rhododendron multiflorum* (formerly *Menziesia multiflora*), native to Japan, were planted along with lower-growing species closer to the trail, including the blue-green-leaved *R. cyanocarpum*, a Chinese species.

For a mid-level focal point, we added a small, as yet undetermined species of...
Rehderodendron from seed collected in northern Burma by Peter Zale of Longwood Gardens and donated to us by Far Reaches Farm. Other Asian species such as Rhododendron faithiae, R. sinofalconeri ssp. falconeri, and R. arboreum ssp. cinnabarinum add larger leaves and texture and will contrast nicely with the deeply cut foliage of the evergreen shrub Schefflera fengii and the flowers of an existing Hydrangea paniculata. We left a large cedar log in the planting area to provide habitat for wildlife and a more naturalistic feel.

Later in the spring of 2020, we completed another planting farther down the slope. Here, we planted three examples of Hydrangea aff. bretschneideri, collected by Steve Hootman of the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden (RSBG). Native to China, this hydrangea is a sturdy, bushy, deciduous shrub with large, white, lacecap flowers and peeling, chestnut-brown bark. We also planted four examples of Rhododendron moulmainense, recently collected by Dan Hinkley in the mountains of Arunachal Pradesh, in India. A large shrub or small tree with leathery, elliptical leaves, it bears fragrant, white-to-pink, funnel-shaped flowers. In addition, we planted another large-leaved species, the roseflowering R. protistum and an interesting new hybrid from RSBG, R. fortunei ssp. fortunei × yuefengense.

Completing the planting in this area were two small trees from China: Sorbus megalocarpa, an early-flowering mountain ash with large, creamy-white flowers followed by egg-shaped, russet-brown fruits; and Daphniphyllum longiracemosum, a new species for us from that interesting genus, featuring large evergreen leaves with red petioles. These should do well under the now more-open overstory comprised of larger magnolia species, western red cedar, and a singular coast redwood (Sequoia sempervirens).

Closer to the trail and farther to the east on that same slope, an additional area of mainly white-flowering rhododendrons was planted with examples of the fragrant Rhododendron stamineum, from Myanmar and China, surrounding the late-flowering species R. serotinum, native to the north Vietnamese frontier. This area is a bit darker than first two described, but flowering should still be quite effective. Two rarer species in cultivation were also added here: R. glischrum, native to India and Tibet, with purple-flecked, pink flowers; and the recently described R. baihuaense from China, offering white, funnel-shaped flowers on red stems. All of the plants in this site were kindly donated by the RSBG.

Farther to the east and joining the path that borders the beginning of the stream, several interesting foliage plants were installed to complement some of the new specimens added last year. In a shaded opening, among a small rockery, we planted a large-leaved Rhododendron sinogrande—donated from the
Arboretum Foundation’s display at the 2020 Northwest Flower and Garden Festival—along with several specimens of Himalayan mayapple, Sinopodophyllum hexandrum, given by Far Reaches Farm. We also interplanted three specimens of Mahonia (Berberis) eurybracteata hybrids with the newly available Polystichum xiphophyllum, a large, evergreen fern from China. I’m told that the fronds of this fern smell lightly “skunky,” so it will be a fitting echo of the native skunk cabbage (Lysichiton americanum) lower down in the streambed!

Just to the north, we planted another species that came from the Garden Festival display: the distinctly flowering Rhododendron spinuliferum, native to China. With tubular, orange–red flowers that can cause double–takes when in bloom, it is unlike nearly any other available species. Adjacent is a cluster of the jeweled chain fern, Woodwardia unigemmata, with its color–fully long fronds of green, copper and burgundy. For additional summer interest, the lacecap Hydrangea macrophylla ‘Eisvogel’ was included, closer to the trail at the top of the bowl.

**Rhododendron Glen: Upper Bowl**

In the fall of 2020, we added additional shrubs, as well as several perennials and ferns, along
the large staircase that leads down from the rim into the heart of the Glen. (It helped a lot that the morning glory in this area has been fully controlled!) Among new plants, is the attractive, compact, deciduous Rhododendron benhallii ‘Honshu Blue’. Native to Japan, the species was formerly classified as Menziesia cilicalyx until the late Dr. Benjamin Hall of the University of Washington revised its taxonomy. This selection from RSBG features bluish foliage and pale-pink, huckleberry-like blooms in spring. (I greatly admired Menziesia at the Elisabeth Miller Botanical Garden while interning there during graduate school, so I’m pleased to be able to include this colorful cultivar in the Arboretum.)

In the midst of the Rhododendron williamsianum we planted last fall, three Dryopteris tokyoensis now provide some further ferny textural contrast. Here, also, is a lower-growing huckleberry, Vaccinium sikkimense (native to China), which will help continue the ericaceous (heath family) theme of the Glen. The herbaceous peony Paeonia ‘Late Windflower’ promises spring blooms of white flanking the staircase. You’ll also find Uvularia perfoliata, the perfoliate bellwort or merrybells—native to eastern North America and featuring large, pendulous yellow flowers in early spring, along with Solomon’s seal–like foliage. Another hydrangea, Hydrangea serrata ‘Yae no Ezo’, was planted for some additional summer flowers; this selection features small, double-white florets blushed with pink in a lacecap arrangement.

At the bottom of the staircase, in a sunnier spot, we’re experimenting with some new varieties and combinations. We added a woodland ginger, Cautleya spicata ‘Robusta’, with July flowers of yellow and orange. Behind this is a specimen of Fatshedera × lizei ‘Angyo Star’, which will loosely trail among the smaller shrubs and perennials, producing larger evergreen foliage of green, white and cream. Bordering this is a planting of three sunset ferns, Dryopteris lepidopoda—an evergreen species from India, Taiwan and China—whose new fronds of bronze and russet should set off the other colors nicely.

Down the hill, along the stream and the rockery on the north side of the path, we planted several ferns and perennial companions, flanked by other unusual species and heath family members. In the rockery, examples of the bold–foliaged Siebold’s wood fern, Dryopteris sieboldii, were planted amongst existing plantings of the Himalayan maidenhair fern, Adiantum venustum. We also added the large–leafed and reputedly slug–resistant Hosta ‘Abiquia Drinking Gourd’, whose big, puckered, blue–green leaves will provide a color contrast to the green of the ferns. Specimens of the shade–loving woodland peony Paeonia mairei, from the mountains of Central China, were planted to add some large spring flowers, and the charming evergreen ground–cover Coptis japonica will provide additional texture. East of the rockery, we planted the infrequently seen rhododendron relative Enkianthus perulatus, native to Japan. As this matures, it will provide a welcome flash of orange and red fall color, in addition to pendulous bells of white flowers each spring.

Above and to the west, to form a backdrop to the rockery, we planted several species rhododendrons new to Arboretum. These include the red–flowering R. hookeri from India and the large–leaved R. fulvum var. fulvum from China, offering white–to–pink flowers. We also planted another Wollemi pine (Wollemia nobilis) to form a three–specimen grove of this recently discovered species. They are a fitting complement to the large dawn redwoods on the opposite bank of the creek. Both species were once known only through fossil records, and the Glen will now provide a great venue for educating visitors and students about species conservation and the continuing excitement of botanical discovery.

Finally, on the south bank of the creek, below the dawn redwood grove, three tree–like species rhododendrons have replaced an overgrown tangle of Rhododendron ponticum, which had long overtaken the original cultivar planted there in the 1940s. We planted Rhododendron macabeanum, native to northeastern India, Rhododendron irroratum from northern Vietnam and China, and R. rex ssp. rex from southwest China. These will bloom in shades of cream, yellow and light pink, respectively. Rhododendron macabeanum and R.
rex ssp. rex also offer very large, dramatic foliage. (We already have an outstanding specimen of *R. macabeum* in the Dan Hinkley Asian Maple Collection area, dating to 1961, and I’m excited to add another example to the collection.)

**Pacific Connections Entry Gardens**

In the China Entry Garden, we added a few new specimens to provide structure and a longer season of interest, as well as to expand the number of genera represented—an ongoing goal for this display. These include several donations from Dan Hinkley of plants grown from seeds collected in the wild: two *Clethra kaipoensis*, plus a *Phoebe neunrantha* and a *Dendropanax protetus*. We also added a *Schima argentea*, an evergreen camellia relative collected by the RSBG. All of these new plants are seldom encountered in gardens.

*Clethra kaipoensis* features fragrant, white summer flowers and attractive rough, fissured bark, and it should also produce good fall color. *Phoebe neunrantha* is a small, broadleaf evergreen tree in the laurel family. *Dendropanax protetus* is an unusual member of the aralia family, with variably shaped evergreen leaves that can be either unlobed or two-to-three lobed and deeply cut. *Schima argentea* is a large shrub or small tree from Southeast Asia featuring white, camellia-like blooms. Like its cousin *Franklinia*, it apparently flowers in late summer in cultivation. I am hopeful it will perform well in our warming climate.

In the expanded Australia Entry Garden, we added several plants—including more examples of *Eucalyptus* species. Further additions are planned for next year, as bed preparation allows. These are most successful when planted young, but they grow fast in the first few years. Look for initially small *Eucalyptus pauciflora* var. *niphophila* (snow gum), *E. parvifolia* (small leaf gum), and *E. perriniana* (spinning gum) to put on rapid growth soon.

In the New Zealand Entry Garden, several new plants and species were added. They are easy to find because each one is surrounded by a plastic protective barrier. Over the last few years, new plantings in this area—and much of the Arboretum—have been preferentially nibbled by rabbits. The barriers will help fend off the hungry herbivores while the plants get established.

New additions include *Olearia ‘Waikariensis’*, a hybrid daisy bush that promises white summer flowers with coconut fragrance on a compact evergreen (or more accurately “ever-gray”) plant. You’ll also see *Podocarpus nivalis ‘Jalako Red’*, a colorfully tipped selection of the low-growing conifer commonly called snow totara; and *Muehlenbeckia astonii*, perhaps best described as a shrub version of the better-known creeping wire vine, *Muehlenbeckia axillaris*—or perhaps as an extra-congested *Corokia*. We also planted additional examples of *Pittosporum tenuifolium ‘County Park Dwarf’*.
New Zealand Forest
Farther down into the New Zealand Forest proper, in the Griselinia Bush section of broadleaf evergreens, we incorporated a couple more *Olearia × haastii* with the existing plantings of this attractive, compact, summer-blooming shrub. We also added a specimen of *Olearia nummulariifolia*, a finer-leaved daisy bush, among the tussock grasses.

Where the trail bends into the Mountain Beech section of the forest, several *Fuchsia excorticata* (tree fuchsia) were planted. This is the largest member of the genus *Fuchsia*, and one of the few deciduous trees native to New Zealand. While it can reach over 50 feet in the wild, it generally only reaches up to 10 feet in cultivation. The red and purple flowers are pendulous but not as extravagant as the common hybrids in our gardens. If these specimens can make it through a few winters here, they should mature into impressive shrubs with time.

Here also, we began the planting of numerous specimens of mountain beech (*Nothofagus solandri* var. *cliffortioides*, syn. *Fuscospora cliffortioides*). These were grown from seed collected in the wild in New Zealand last year by Kyra Matin. (See “Developing the New Zealand Collection,” in the Winter 2020 “Bulletin.”) Mountain beech was one of the two major tree species (the other being silver beech, *Nothofagus menziesii*) planned for the forest display. The grower for the original 2013 project was unable to procure this species for the forest, so we are excited about having these trees at last!

There are several *Gunnera* species native to New Zealand, of much smaller size than the typical giant *Gunnera tinctoria* (Chilean rhubarb/dinosaur food) from Chile. We procured one species, *Gunnera prorepens*, from Far Reaches Farm and have installed this charming little groundcover with red floral spikes at the top of one of the swales. In the wild, the plant prefers moist conditions—something we have in abundance in our forest display.

Cascadia, Chile and China Forests
In Cascadia, the forest saw the additions of many *Holodiscus microphyllus*, a diminutive relative of our native oceanspray (*H. discolor*) that grows wild in mid- to high elevations in Oregon, California and the Great Basin. We also planted the first fruits of last year’s UWBG-Heronswood-Kruckeberg collecting trip to the Siskiyou Mountains: several *Aralia californica*. This unusual, very large perennial with white, pom-pom–like flowers and purple–black berries will provide a notable presence in several places in the forest. We will be planting many more species from this expedition in the coming years.
In the Chile section, the primary addition was several large, rooted cuttings of *Embothrium coccineum* (Chilean fire tree) harvested from donor Van Bobbitt’s garden. This was made possible by a gift from former Arboretum Director John Wott, who has long sought further examples of this often finicky but spectacular tree for our collections. We’ve had good success with cuttings from Mr. Bobbitt’s parent tree in the past, and we hope many of the 12 specimens we installed succeed. We planted them in various locations in the Gateway to Chile and along the Loop Trail as it passes through the future Chile Forest. Along the Loop Trail, we also added two *Saxegothaea conspicua* (Prince Albert yew or mañio), a shade-tolerant conifer related to podocarps but resembling a yew.

In the China Forest, changes were minor compared to previous years. The species rose *Rosa omeiensis* was included in a sunnier area near the junction of the old service road opposite the Japanese Garden, and we planted several *Deutzia longiflora* in this area as well. They will add further floral interest and more diversity of bloom.

**Lake Washington Boulevard and Arboretum Creek**

Several locations along the Boulevard were improved with new plantings as part of ongoing efforts funded through a longtime donor to the Arboretum Foundation. Across from the Japanese Garden, we added several plants of Japanese origin to enhance the curb appeal of the Boulevard. Two *Osmanthus heterophyllus* cultivars, ‘Goshiki’ and ‘Variegatus’, were planted to help screen the old service road on the east side of the Boulevard and have the added benefit of fragrant fall flowers and bright, variegated, holly-like foliage. To complement these specimens, we planted several glossy-foliaged *Aucuba japonica* ‘Rozannie’ and a grouping of three *Rhododendron* ‘Yaku Angel’, a compact hybrid with white flowers.

Along the trail and roadside, we added several *Viburnum dilatatum* (linden viburnum), which features white flowers, red berries, and good fall color. We also added three small trees to this area: *Lindera obtusiloba* (Japanese spicebush), *Stewartia pseudocamellia* (Japanese stewartia), and *Cornus kousa* (Kousa dogwood). The spicebush offers bright-yellow flowers in late winter, three shapes of leaves (one-, two- or three-lobed) and clear-yellow fall color. The stewartia is well known as an outstanding four-season tree, and the Kousa dogwood will add late-spring flowers, good fall color, and increasingly attractive, mottled bark as it ages.

Farther north along the Boulevard, at the west side of the crosswalk between the Holly Collection and the large parking lot at the south end of Azalea Way, several deciduous hollies were planted in a berm dedicated to the Deciduous Clade. The berm was created a couple of years ago and had been awaiting more examples of *Ilex verticillata* (winterberry), an eastern North America native. We planted three specimens of the cultivar ‘Winter Red’, along with a pollinating partner, ‘Southern Gentleman’, echoing a similar planting beside the nearby Centennial Summer Garden. The holly’s abundant and long-lasting red berries will create a vibrant new fall and winter display along this historic thoroughfare.

To the north, just across the Boulevard from the Viburnum Collection, we cleared invasives from another section along Arboretum Creek and planted it with natives and some ornamental exotics. Continuing the viburnum theme from across the road, we planted some larger species from eastern North America: *Viburnum prunifolium* (blackhaw viburnum) and *V. lentago* (nannyberry). In time, these will grow between 8 and 12 feet high, bearing abundant white flowers, good fall color, and blue-black fruits that are attractive to birds.

Just beyond the lawn bordering the road, six large *Hydrangea quercifolia* ‘Flemygea’ (SNOW QUEEN™ oakleaf hydrangea) were planted to provide summer bloom along the boulevard. We also added another *Cornus Starlight®* to this stretch of road, where two had been planted in 2019. This hybrid dogwood combines the bloom characteristics of our native *Cornus nuttallii* and the disease resistance of *C. kousa*.

The rest of the plantings here were Pacific Northwest natives, including *Vaccinium ovatum*
(evergreen huckleberry), *Aruncus dioicus* (goat’s beard), *Malus fusca* (Pacific crabapple), *Philadelphus lewisii* (western mock orange) and *Ribes sanguineum* (red flowering currant). We planted several native conifers to provide shade along the creek: two *Picea sitchensis* (Sitka spruce), a *Thuja plicata* (western red cedar), and a *Tsuga heterophylla* (western hemlock).

Across the Boulevard, the main Viburnum Collection area was augmented with additional ornamentals to provide a longer season of interest along the Loop Trail. The plaque honoring June Boeing for her contributions to the Arboretum was underplanted with perennials and bulbs, including *Helleborus × hybridus* (Lenten rose), *Geranium macrorhizum*, *Ophiopogon planiscapus* ‘Ebony Knight’ (black mondo grass), *Astelia chathamica* (silver spear), *Libertia cranwelliae*, and *Iris ‘Asian Alliance’*.

**Witt Winter Garden**

In the Winter Garden, conifers, shrubs and witch-hazels were added to enhance texture, color and fragrance. Three *Osmanthus heterophyllus* ‘Sasaba’, a selection of the holly olive from Japan, were planted in the southeast corner to provide early-season fragrance and a lovely, bamboo-leaf–like texture. The dwarf conifer *Chamaecyparis obtusa* ‘Verdon’ will bring bright swirls of gold and green to the large bed at the northwest corner of the garden.

The witch hazels *Hamamelis × intermedia* ‘Strawberries and Cream’ (dark red and yellow), ‘Birgit’ (dark red), and ‘Sunburst’ (lemon yellow) will extend color and fragrance up the hill by the garden’s northeast entrance. This area will feature additional witch hazel family members in the coming year, including *Corylopsis* (winter–hazel), *Parrotiopsis jacquemontii*, and *Sycopsis sinensis* (Chinese fig hazel). These and other enhancements in the Winter Garden were funded by the Lake Washington Garden Club Unit III in memory of Jean Witt.
Lower Woodland Garden Pond
In November of 2016, a late fall storm felled a large *Liquidambar styraciflua* (sweetgum) at the east end of the lower Woodland Garden pond. Access to the site was difficult across the streambed connecting to the upper pond, and it became clear that removing the still-attached root ball would not be easy. Complicating matters was the damage to the stream channel and shifted rockery that was beginning to cause erosion into the pond.

Thanks to grant funding from the Hugh and Jane Ferguson Foundation, secured by the Arboretum Foundation, we were able to dedicate resources for the removal of the fallen tree and restoration of the creek bed at the pond entrance. During the dry summer months of 2020, our arborists built a platform over the stream channel to remove the trunk and roots safely, while keeping debris out of the pond. This past fall, we reset the boulders and added new material to stabilize the bank and streambed.

We selected a replacement tree that will grow to a similar size as the fallen sweetgum: *Parrotia persica* ‘Vanessa’. This cultivar of the Persian ironwood will provide year-round appeal. It has a somewhat narrower form than the straight species, and features attractive, witch-hazel-like leaves (being in the same family, the Hamamelidaceae); flaking, mottled bark with age; and botanically interesting flowers in spring. Best of all, this species is known for a long season of wonderful fall color in shades of gold, orange and claret. We only have two other examples of *Parrotia* in the Arboretum—growing in the bus turnaround at Pacific Connections—and desired more. It is a fitting addition to the Woodland Garden.

The increased light by the pond has allowed a nearby *Disanthus cercidifolius* (redbud hazel) to flourish and color up with more intensity in the fall. To complement this shrub, we planted a specimen of its recently described relative, *Disanthus ovatifolius*, courtesy of Dan Hinkley. (See Dan’s article “Disanthus ovatifolius: A New Vietnamese Tree Species with a Tangled Taxonomy,” in the Fall 2020 “Bulletin.”)

Signature Bed
For many years now, the Hardy Fern Foundation has provided a wonderful display of ferns and companion plants in the Signature Bed planting area on the west side of the Graham Visitors Center. This spring, with the recent removal of the overhead trellis, it was decided to bring in a selection of interesting maples to provide overhead shade to the plantings below.

In addition to an example of *Acer japonicum* ‘Aconitifolium’ (fernleaf fullmoon maple, only the second one in the Arboretum!), the plantings include three *A. japonicum* ‘Emmit’s Pumpkin’ and a low-growing *A. japonicum* ‘Ed Wood’. One each of the varieties *Acer palmatum* ‘Moonfire’, ‘Purple Ghost’, and ‘Olsen’s Frosted Strawberry’, all featuring uniquely colored foliage and leaf shapes, help complete the scene. (See “Refreshing the Signature Bed” by Richie Steffen, in the Fall 2020 “Bulletin,” to learn more about the new ferns and companion plants.)

These are just a sampling of the many new plantings you can enjoy on your next visit to the Arboretum. Your support helps make it all possible. More than ever before, thank you for helping to steward this wonderful garden that all can enjoy!

**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.