



Bloedel Reserve's Grounds & Horticulture Staff

Aaron Trapp, Tobin Tripp, Dave Amos, Andy Moss, Bob Braid,

Sean Peterson, Justin Greer, Haley Wiggins, Etta Lilienthal, Daren Streng, Philip Bloomquist, Erin Hill and Ken Little (not pictured)

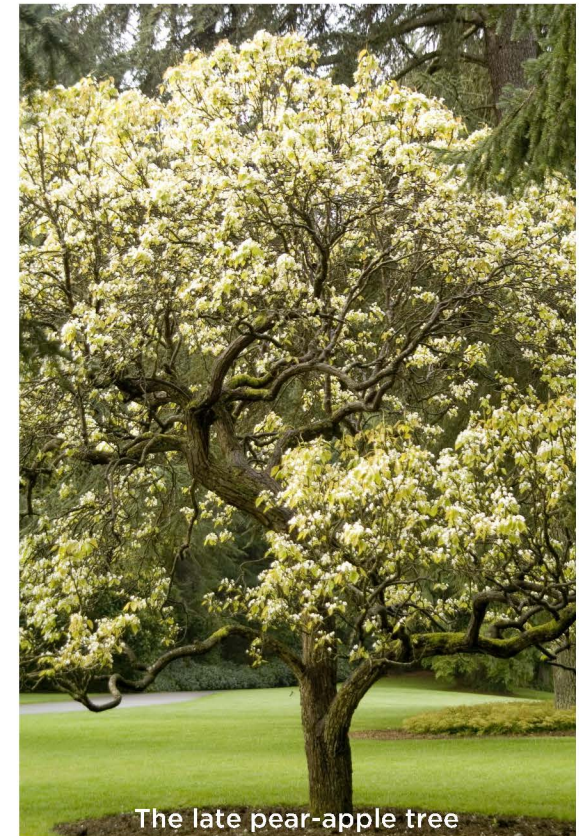
We should have known early on that 2020 was going to be a year unlike any other at the Bloedel Reserve. In February, prior to the shut down, we lost a nearly 50-year old pear-apple near the Residence to a snowstorm. Before Ken Little limbed and removed the fallen tree, Philip Bloomquist collected scion wood to graft onto young apple trees in the nursery, so that the pear-apple might live again. We used plugs from a nearby lawn that Tobin Tripp was renovating to fill in the old tree circle, and Ben Buchanan adjusted irrigation heads to help the lawn reclaim the area. When Dave Amos returned, he decided the lawn fix that we attempted during his absence was not to his standards. He immediately regraded it and sowed in new grass seed. As anyone who works on the grounds knows, one does not mess with Dave's lawns! A good thing too, because barely a sign of the tree circle remains today.

The unexpected challenge of the pear-apple was met by the entire team with grace, good humor, and hard work. When the shutdown sent everyone home, leaving the majority of care on the shoulders of Caretaker Bob Braid and his wife Dorothy, nature didn't slow down. For almost two months, everything grew with wild abandon, giving us plenty to catch up with when we returned. When finally allowed back on the grounds, our staff focused primarily on the weeds that had been growing unchecked, and with helping each other to prepare the Reserve for the public to enjoy once again. We were ecstatic when our faithful volunteers were allowed to rejoin us. We sincerely missed them and all the hard work they do.

Although we generally work in our own areas or fields of expertise, grounds staff were able to come together and tackle several group projects last year. Prior to the loss of the pear-apple, a mid-January snow storm brought down six Himalayan birches from the edge of the Bluff. It took the crew a week and well over a dozen trailer loads to clean up. March in the Birch Garden saw grounds staff cutting back an 8-foot-tall wall of salal down to knee level, exposing evergreen winter hazels, rhododendrons, a crabapple, and a seven-sons tree, all swallowed up by the vigorous salal. We removed more than 20 yards of material!

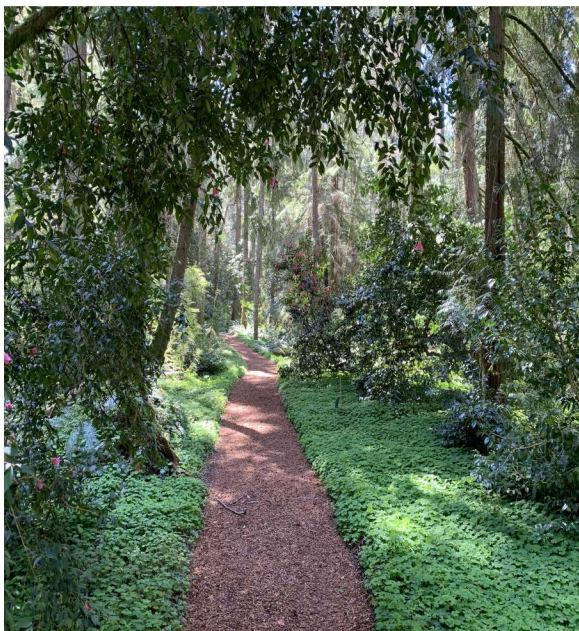
Lastly, the Pollinator Meadow was mowed to the ground in October to facilitate the sowing of wildflower seed, in addition to planting thousands of bulbs and plugs. This involved the preliminary steps of hand-pulling scotch broom and alder saplings, as well as marking irrigation infrastructure with stakes in order to avoid damage with the tractor. After mowing, staff blew the cut thatch into piles and moved it by the trailer-full to be spread out in the hedgerow as an experimental mulch treatment.

In late September 2020, we were very fortunate in being able to bring on three full-time temporary gardeners: Erin Hill, Etta Lilienthal, and Chase Lehotsky. Erin was a tremendous help in the Buxton Bird Marsh, accomplishing a lot on the ground and also helping to develop monitoring protocols and maps of our extensive planting efforts. Etta worked in the Rhododendron Glen along side Andy Moss and was instrumental in several projects, including plantings near the Waterfall Overlook, renovating the bed around the stone bench in the Birch Garden, and cleaning out the numerous large beds of the Glen. Chase



The late pear-apple tree

2020 HIGHLIGHTS



Constantly Improving

Using a rented aerial lift, we removed three hazard hemlocks and pruned the birch trees at the Gatehouse, as well as the magnolias at the top of the Glen.

Camellia Trail was the beneficiary of numerous plantings in the fall, including trilliums, lilies, camellias, and fragrant *sarcococca*.

Sphagnum moss, an ecologically valuable native of boggy areas, was harvested and is being propagated for eventual establishment in several potential sites on the grounds, including the Bird Marsh pond and Moss Garden. We are excited to continue learning about the process of propagating sphagnum and will proceed responsibly by limiting how much we harvest from any single location, including two of our favorite harvest sites -- the Olympic National Forest and Islandwood School.



Public Events

We grew hundreds of squashes and gourds, including two giant pumpkins for the annual *Super Squash Scavenger Hunt* display. One pumpkin weighed over 1,100 pounds!

Winter in the Woods, a new family seasonal attraction, was developed, piloted, and successfully installed. The grounds were decorated with dozens of handmade snow people, wooden deer, carved mushrooms and numerous outdoor holiday trees.



Green Practices

We made turf management more sustainable by using less water and switching to an organic, phosphate-free fertilizer, used in moderation.

Invasive weed species removal, primarily Canadian thistle and also some hedge bindweed, continued in the meadows around the Sheep Sheds and the Japanese Garden.

Staff planted over 100 Douglas firs, hemlocks and cedars as part of an ongoing forest succession plan. Native conifer saplings were transplanted out in wooded areas across the grounds. We hope to expand this important long-term forest health initiative in coming years.



Sharing Knowledge

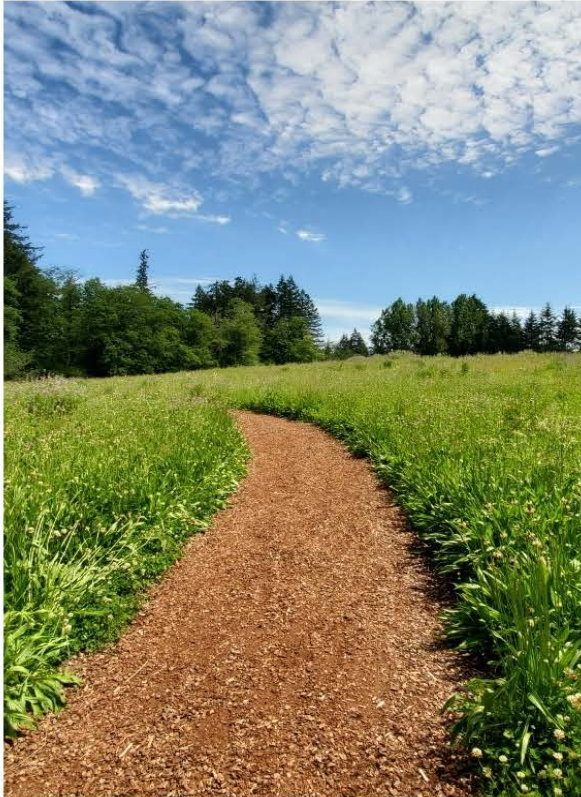
Darren Strenge wrote 19 articles for the Bloedel Reserve website and newsletter!

The popular *Bloedel Plant Pick of the Month* by Sean Peterson began its third year.

Joe DeMaio contributed an informational video on how to construct Bloedel Reserve's very popular wattle fences.

A piece on the exam required to become a Certified Professional Horticulturist in Washington State was written by Haley Wiggins.

Tobin Tripp wrote an article on invasive species control efforts at the Reserve.



Buxton Bird Marsh & Meadow

Red currants, trilliums, dogwoods, and evergreen *Vancouverias* were among the new plantings in the entrance woods to the Bird Marsh.

Wildflowers flourished in the new pollinator meadow last spring and summer. Visitors were able to enjoy the daffodil bloom but few got to see the first year of thousands of cammas flowers strewn across the field. However, summer brought vigorous growth of purple lupine, white yarrow, and yellow gumweed, creating a colorful tableau and delighting visitors all summer long.

Weeds grew vigorously as well in the newly renovated area! More than an acre of blackberry, stinging nettle, and salmonberry was cleared from the hedgerow in the fall, releasing dozens of shrubs from the encroaching vegetation.

Spur trails up and back to the meadow overlook create a triangular patch that has been plagued by failed planting efforts ever since the trails were installed. In December, we decided to start over, laying cardboard over the weeds, then depositing several yards of mixed soil and compost on top. After planting bulbs, plugs, and container plants, we over-seeded with selected wildflowers and grasses. The triangle has filled in nicely and acts as a new point of interest in the meadow.



Moss Garden

Staff mucked out four small, silted-in ponds in the Moss Garden, transforming them from mud pits into low-lying pools of reflective water.

A new Japanese umbrella pine was planted in a prominent position in the Moss Garden, and a native ash tree was added to the plant palette as well.



Japanese Garden

Staff continued to treat sections of the cotoneaster mound plagued by a bacterial disease.

Despite the Covid-19 closure, Bob Braid was able to complete his annual pruning routines and keep the Japanese Garden looking as sculpted and beautiful as ever.

Renovating the shi-shi-odoshi (bamboo deer scare) and stream was a significant accomplishment, and the stream sides were planted with additional ferns and hepaticas.



Residence & Glen

The Residence's boxwood hedge renovations continued in 2020. We're in the fifth year of a seven-year renovation meant to reestablish original dimensions and revitalize boxwood plants.

A camellia was established to the right of the Residence in front of the white wall. This tree will be espaliered to create a beautiful new feature at the Residence.

An unplanted area near the copper beech and behind the boxwood hedge was a perpetual source of weeds on the slopes leading down to the Glen — until we dug it out, lined it with bamboo barrier, and filled it in with two species of *Reineckea* (a type of lily) and an orchid border of *Spiranthes*.

We completed a small but impactful renovation to the stone bench in the Birch garden. This involved raising the elevation of the adjacent bed and replanting with unique fern, *Epimedium*, and *Galanthus* species, as well as a unique species of rhododendron, *R. forrestii*, which grows as a ground cover.

A large area of stream bank between the Waterfall Overlook and the Birch Garden was cleared of salmonberry, blackberry, and stinging nettle, then planted over with microgunnera, as well as chain ferns, blue bean trees, rhododendrons, *Scheffleras*, *dichroa*, an azara, a rare Florida lily, an evergreen magnolia, and a purple-leaf hydrangea. To say this area got a makeover is an understatement!

NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN 2021

In February 2021, we were very excited to bring Etta Lillenthal back as a gardener in the Glen. She has already helped Andy Moss complete several more projects. They also initiated an effort to map out all the rhododendron species planted throughout the Glen in recent years. Justin Greer started in late March as a full-time temporary grounds staff member, working primarily in the Buxton Bird Marsh. He has impressed us all with his ability to quickly learn Latin and common names of a large number of meadow and woodland plants, as well as with his general enthusiasm and work ethic. Our newest hire is Aaron Trapp who, like Justin, is a Bainbridge Island native. He will be helping with lawn maintenance, weeding, and assistance with whatever else is needed.

Erin Hill proved an invaluable addition to the grounds staff last fall and has stayed on as a part-time gardener in the Buxton Bird Marsh. Because of her background in landscape architecture, she was additionally asked to lead the Heritage Landscape Report (HLR) Interpretation Project. The HLR in its current form is an extremely thorough documentation of the history, design decisions, and site conditions of the entire grounds, but so large as to be cumbersome for everyday use. Erin has been sifting through the document, creating pamphlets that communicate the highlights, history, and design of specific gardens on the grounds in a more approachable manner. Currently these documents are being utilized to deepen Board, staff, and community members' understanding of the Bloedel Reserve.

The HLR work is in tandem with another exciting effort underway: the redesign of the Arrival Landscape at the front entrance. Erin is working on plans that will help clarify issues around guest circulation and usage, as well as create a more botanically lush and welcoming experience for guests upon arrival. The task force dedicated to this effort includes both staff and board members, and we are all eager to see the outcome.



Grounds Committee Touring The Glen



Grounds Committee learning about the former magnolia allee at the North Bank



Mason Bee Box in the Pollinator Meadow

Bloedel Reserve is a 501 (c)(3) nonprofit public charity; federal tax identification #91-6182786.

We are grateful to the many members, donors, sponsors, and grantors whose generous support keeps our gardens and landscapes green and growing-- with a special thanks to dozens of volunteers whose hard work on the grounds helps ensure a premiere horticultural experience for our guests in all four seasons.