

KEY PLANTINGS



Skimmia japonica

This Japanese native with white blossoms creates bright red fruits in the winter, adding a delightful pop of color.



Vaccinium parvifolium

Deciduous huckleberry are a Pacific Northwest native with a delicate texture and delicious fruit.



Polystichum munitum

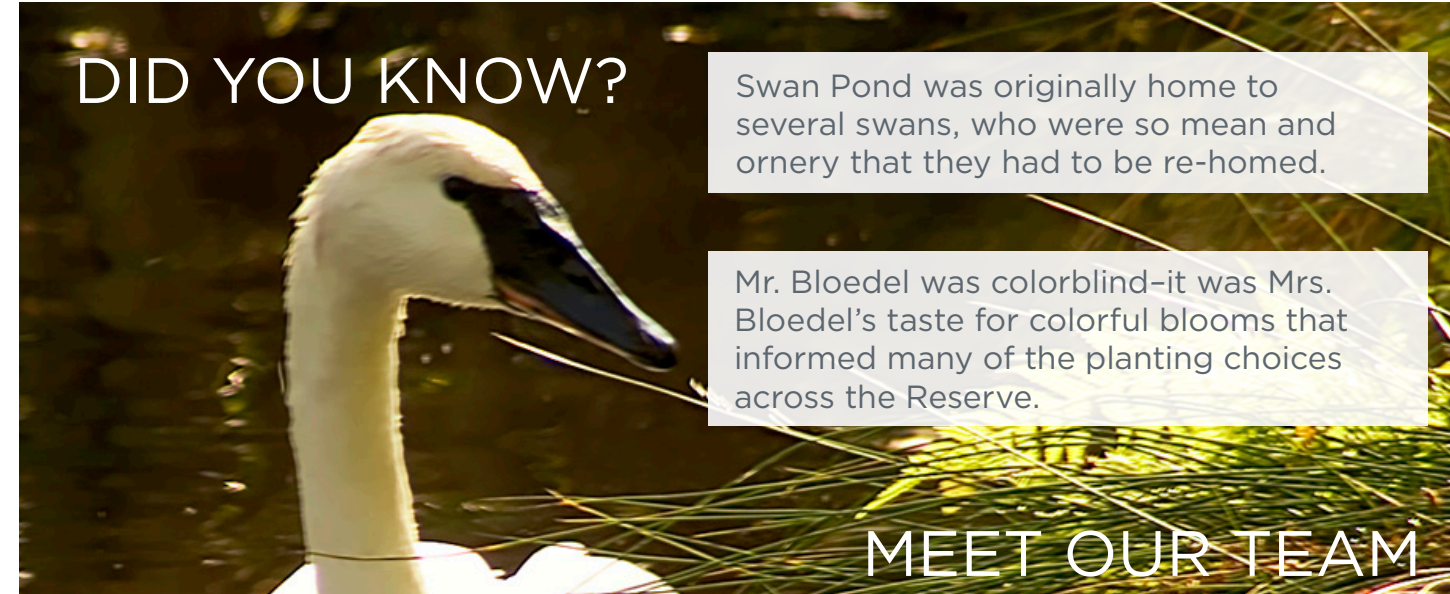
Robust and hardy, these sword ferns are another native plant that combined with salal, provide a luscious groundcover.



Pseudotsuga menziesii

These stately Douglas firs define Orchid Trail, providing the tall trunks and cathedral-like cover that is so inspiring.

DID YOU KNOW?



Swan Pond was originally home to several swans, who were so mean and ornery that they had to be re-homed.

Mr. Bloedel was colorblind—it was Mrs. Bloedel’s taste for colorful blooms that informed many of the planting choices across the Reserve.

MEET OUR TEAM



Etta Lilienthal has one of the most interesting careers with the Reserve. She began as a Volunteer in 2020, worked as a Grounds & Horticulture Associate, and is now the Communications Manager.



Becky Walliman is the Director of Development & Communications. She grew up on Bainbridge Island and now lives here with her family.



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ORCHID TRAIL & SWAN POND

ʔutiḡdubuḡ ti swatix wṡəd | This land takes care of us

1954

A small stream which crossed under the drive was dammed, creating the Rhododendron Glen waterfall on one side and the Swan Pond on the other. It becomes the first major design feature created by the Bloedels.

1970s

Proposed by Thomas Church in the 50s, Orchid Trail (originally called “Church’s Walk”) was built in 1974, connecting the Rhododendron Glen to the Japanese Garden through a tall cathedral of evergreen trees.

Coral root orchids thrived in this area, giving the trail its commonly used name.

The eponymous swans were introduced to the pond in the mid-70s. A floating nesting platform was constructed and remained through the mid-80s.

1985 - 1987

In 1987 Designer Geoff Rausch was hired by Prentice Bloedel to design a Swan Pond viewing garden for Mrs. Bloedel. A gently graded trail was created before the log steps, leading to the pond edge. A teak bench, along with colorful plantings, were added to provide a restful, enclosed place to enjoy the view towards the Mid Pond.

1989

Orchid Trail abruptly terminates at the Japanese Garden. Environmental Planning and Design installs a torii gate designed by Koichi Kawana to create a sense of conclusion and transition.

1995 - Today

The areas of Swan Pond and Orchid Trail remain largely unchanged. Aging conifers and slight changes to the micro-climate of the woods have shifted the ecology enough that the unique orchids are rarer, but can still be found.

THE EXPERIENCE

A narrow trail silently winds uphill through a cathedral-like woodland, where light slices through tall hemlock and fir trunks to illuminate the dark and rich forest floor. Salal, sword ferns, and orchids help make the visitor feel ensconced within the narrow forest walk.

Near where the trail head meets the road, a small viewing garden tucked behind a massive ancient stump invites viewers to pause and admire the still waters of the Swan Pond. Looking along its length one is struck by the varied textured foliage along its bank, and the bright inviting Mid Pond landscape in the distance.



River otter



Merganser



Belted kingfisher



Bald eagle

QUIET, CALM REFLECTION