Highlands Biological Station
Botanical Gardens & Grounds Planning and Advisory Committee
Update for HBS Board of Directors
October 24, 2021

Ken Conover, Chair

The Botanical Gardens & Grounds Planning and Advisory Committee (herein referred to as Committee) began its second year of operation in August. The Committee continues to review progress on priorities established with our Roadmap development process and address any new business. Committee membership continues to include Bryding Adams, Lynda Anderson, Lisa Armstrong, Margie Bauer, Ken Conover, Jim Costa, Jason Love, Paul Manos, Rachel Martin, Kathy Mathews, Helen Regenry, Liz Sargent, Dollie Swanson, and Glenda Zahner.

Roadmap Implementation

Subcommittees are assisting the HBS with three top priority actions items. Following is the status of each.

1. HBS South gateway garden (P1) and wayfinding and interpretation signage (P2).
   The Highlands Biological Foundation (HBF) has yet to address the funding request from the HBS. A grant proposal for $24,000 was submitted by the HBS to the Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust for the planning and design of a comprehensive wayfinding and interpretation plan by Equinox Environmental. The Trust will communicate their funding decisions in November.

2. HBS conservation mission statement and conservation program (C2).
   The subcommittee chair will be scheduling a second meeting of the subcommittee to continue benchmarking against the Botanic Gardens Conservation International accreditation standards and reviewing a draft statement.

3. HBS Bridges and boardwalks (G1).
   The subcommittee and volunteers assessed and documented the conditions of all bridges, boardwalks, paths, steps, and handrails on the HBS campus. A detailed report including photographs is under development. This is a multi-step and multi-year project to identify priorities for repair or replacement as well as funding sources.

Following is the status of other Roadmap priorities being led by HBS staff.

4. Implement the HBS Living Collections Policy (C1).
   The BRAHAMS collection database software is up and running. No accession data has yet been added due to summer garden priorities. The Hemlock data will be added first.

5. Identify funding mechanisms to obtain additional support (H1).
   Committee members are investigating potential grant sources for garden projects. The HBS has submitted grants to the Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust, as described above, and to the 1889 Impact Grant program at WCU for improvements to the Plants of the Cherokee Garden.

6. Develop management plans for sensitive garden areas and plants (H3).
   HBS staff will devote time to this priority in the fall. Relevant draft maintenance plans were developed by garden volunteers in 2019 for the Moss Garden and Woodland Way.

7. Determine appropriate trail and garden names (P3).
   HBS staff are identifying trail and garden names for the wayfinding project and new campus maps. This Committee will provide input and recognizes the challenges of naming gardens for people. The Committee is considering names descriptive of the habitat for specific garden areas and possibly honoring garden founders and supports with plaques on additional garden benches.

Moss Garden Enhancements

The Executive Director asked that Lynda Anderson update and revise the plans she developed last year for enhancing the Moss Garden. The desire is for some modest improvements utilizing the donated funds ($2,500) received by the Foundation for the Moss Garden. The Committee is reviewing the updated project plan that will be discussed at the next Committee meeting in November.

Friends of the Garden Volunteers

Several committee members along with other community volunteers have donated their time to assist with garden maintenance and projects. Volunteers helped maintain and enhance the Nature Center, Woodland Way, Homeowner, Illges, Rock Outcrop, Moss, Plants of the Cherokee, Administration, and Butterfly gardens in the Demonstration zone; and the Fern Trail, Bog, Woodland Loop, and Mary's Garden in the Core (Historical) Botanical Garden zone.

Foundation Proposal to Add Shade to North Campus Plaza

The Committee reviewed the HBF proposal to add three oak trees to the new North Campus Plaza to provide shade. After a careful review the Committee recommended that a 4 to 6 inches DBH *Quercus muhlenbergii* is appropriate in the area just north of the map kiosk given the consensus of HBS staff that the semi-circular drive-through can be removed. The Committee determined that the sites near the restroom and west of the map kiosk are not appropriate for large trees that would interfere with utilities and the weather station. The Committee recommended that a larger tree be planted in the area immediately south of the handicapped parking area between the walking path and the lake. This area could benefit from a focal point such as a tree, and being just to the south of the plaza area, would be the best placement for a tree to cast shade on the plaza. A *Nyssa sylvatica* was suggested as it is a straight-growing, upright species with good canopy and excellent fall color.