Highlands Biological Station
Botanical Gardens & Grounds Planning and Advisory Committee
Update for HBS Board of Directors
December 5, 2022

Ken Conover, Chair

The Botanical Gardens & Grounds Planning and Advisory Committee continues to assist the HBS with implementing Roadmap priorities.

Current Committee members are Bryding Adams, Lynda Anderson, Ken Conover, Jim Costa, Jason Love, Paul Manos, Kathy Mathews, Charlotte Muir, Helen Regenry, Liz Sargent, Dollie Swanson, and Glenda Zahner. Margie Bauer, an inaugural Committee member, decided in October to pause her participation on this Committee given her travel plans. We are glad that Margie will continue to volunteer when she is here and we look forward to Margie participating on the Committee again in the future.

Our teacher, mentor and friend Dr. Larry Mellichamp passed away in August. Larry, or "Dr. M" as he was affectionately called by many, loved the Station and the Botanical Gardens. Dr. Mellichamp was a professor emeritus of botany and horticulture at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte and former director of the University's Botanical Gardens. Larry taught many workshops at the HBS, advised us on how to revitalize the botanical gardens, guided us in developing a Living Collections Policy, and promoted the uniqueness of the Highlands Botanical Garden with Zahner lectures and garden tours for Cullowhee Native Plant Conference participants. He personally worked with HBS staff and volunteers to remove the overgrowth of woody shrubs in the bog garden along the lake margins. The HBS bog garden was dedicated in honor of Dr. Larry Mellichamp during his visit to the garden on October 28, 2020. During the dedication, Larry described the bog garden as the most special habitat in the Botanical Gardens and one with the most species of rare and endangered plants.

The HBS Horticultural Specialist resigned and departed at the end of August. The position remains vacant and is expected to be filled by next spring. In the interim, HBS staff and volunteers have worked together to maintain the gardens and grounds.

Roadmap Implementation
During the past five months, the HBS and Committee have made significant progress on several priorities.

1. Native Plant Symposium (P4)

We had a successful return of the Native Plant Symposium, *60 Years of Conservation Gardening* on September 16 & 17, 2022. Over 100 participants enjoyed a beautiful fall evening in the HBS amphitheater for a celebration of the garden with garden tours, a presentation by Jim Costa on the history of the Station and gardens, and a reception hosted by the Foundation. The following day included educational and thought-provoking presentations by our speakers Patrick McMillan, Heather Alley, Justin Robinson, and Doug

Tallamy and silent and live auctions of native plants, artwork, and photography. Participants provided very positive feedback and proceeds exceeded $15,000. Thanks to HBS staff and Committee members who stepped up in the few weeks preceding the event to complete the preparations after the resignation of the Horticultural Specialist who was leading the organizing efforts. Bryding Adams is leading the planning group for the next Native Plant Symposium scheduled for September 15 & 16, 2023. Several other Committee members have volunteered for the planning group.

2. Wayfinding and interpretation signage (P2)

Equinox Environmental presented a first draft of a comprehensive wayfinding and interpretation plan for the gardens and grounds. The HBS leadership has provided feedback to Equinox. The plan is being revised by Equinox and will then be shared with the full wayfinding steering committee for additional feedback. The final plan and cost projections for implementation will inform a fund-raising plan.

3. HBS Bridges, boardwalks, benches, trail repairs (G1)

Improvements were made this summer by HBS neighbor and friend Jim Chance and his volunteers including removing obsolete steps on the steep slope of the Moss Garden, building new stone steps into the Moss Garden from the driveway, improving the bottom step going into the Historic Woodlands, adding stone steps at the end of Creekside Trail, replacing the steps that lead down to the creek just before the Woodland Loop, and rebuilding the stone cribbing on the edge of the creek. There remains an urgent need for repair on the Creekside Trail where a section of the steep, narrow trail is eroding and replacement of damaged stone steps in the Plants of the Cherokee Garden.

Friends of the Garden Volunteers

Committee members and others have also volunteered many hour to help maintain the gardens. In July, volunteers weeded and cleaned the Homeowner Demonstration Garden, the Rock Outcrop Garden, and the Lakeside Bog in preparation for a Cullowhee Native Plant Conference tour led by Larry Mellichamp on July 22.

In August and early September there was a focused effort to enhance the gardens prior to the garden tours of the Native Plant Symposium. Volunteers added plants to the one-year old Homeowner Demonstration Garden, planted the Woodland Way rain garden, weeded and cleaned these gardens and the patio area behind the Foreman Museum, cut back rhododendrons and planted ferns around the Amphitheater stage, and cut back grasses around the blooming bog plants in the Lakeside Bog.

Volunteers have also worked in Creekside Glen (formerly Mary's Garden) to remove non-native plants, thin aggressive plants, and prune back some rhododendrons; added three mature *Rhododendron periclymenoides* donated by Glenda in Woodland Way; and maintained and enhanced the Moss Garden (see more details below).

Moss Garden Enhancements

During the summer, several enhancements have been implemented. The obsolete steps on the steep slope of the Moss Garden were removed, new stone steps into the Moss Garden from the driveway were added, a stumpery was created using stumps and logs to divert rainwater runoff from the moss, and additional mosses were collected from the Station and planted. Ferns, rhododendrons, and other plants will be added to the areas surrounding the Moss Garden in the spring. Additional moss species are desired to expand the collection of mosses for educational purposes. The benches will be moved to a location facing the mossy slope. A bench will be dedicated to honor Dr. Lewis Anderson.