Highlands Biological Station
Botanical Gardens & Grounds Planning and Advisory Committee
Update for HBS Board of Directors
November 19, 2023

Ken Conover, Chair

The Botanical Gardens & Grounds Planning and Advisory Committee continues to meet monthly and assist the HBS with implementing Gardens and Grounds Roadmap priorities. August marked the three year anniversary of the creation of this Committee.

Current Committee members are Bryding Adams, Lynda Anderson, Ken Conover, Jim Costa, Jason Love, Paul Manos, Kathy Mathews, Liz Sargent, Dollie Swanson, and Glenda Zahner.

Roadmap Implementation
During the past six months, the HBS and Committee continue to make significant progress on several priorities.

1. Public Engagement

Garden Tours:

Garden tours scheduled every Wednesday at noon for the public from May 31 to August 2 attracted 10 to 15 people every week. The scheduling allowed a number of new garden volunteers to attend after their volunteer activities on Wednesday mornings. Thanks to Bryding Adams for developing topics for each tour and identifying tour leaders. And thanks to Committee members, Lynda Anderson, Ken Conover, Jim Costa, Jason Love, and Paul Manos for leading tours. Paul Manos, with assistance from Lynda Anderson, has drafted a garden tour narrative to assist future garden tour leaders. It includes the major garden areas from which tour leaders could select garden stops for a one-hour tour.

Special Event:

The HBS and Committee hosted a successful special event on September 16, the premier presentation by Jim Costa and Bobbi Angell on their new book "Darwin and the Art of Botany: Observations on the Curious World of Plants". Approximately 50 people attended this special event. Proceeds from the book sales and auction of native plants and art will support the Botanical Gardens.

2024 Native Plant Symposium:

Bryding Adams is leading the planning for the 2024 Native Plant Symposium. Mark your calendars for September 13th and 14th.

2. Wayfinding and Interpretative Signage

Equinox is now revising a bid package that WCU Facilities Management will use to solicit bids for implementing a comprehensive wayfinding plan for the gardens and grounds. Jason Love provided comments from the subcommittee and WCU Facilities Management on the first draft of the bid package provided by Equinox in October.

The next phase will focus on developing a comprehensive plan for interpretation including content, signage, and technology to educate visitors about the HBS and gardens. The Committee wishes to enhance the educational value of the gardens for visitors by developing creative ways to integrate education into the gardens.

Jason Love is working with a vendor and HBS staff to design a new garden brochure that will include an updated map consistent with the on-line interactive map and other information about the HBS and Botanical Gardens. Thanks to Maeve Corcoran, daughter of Liz Sargent, for editing the on-line map, adding missing elements, and re-coloring the trails on the map to be consistent with wayfinding trail colors.

3. South Gateway Entrance Garden

Warren Byrd and Sue Nelson, renowned landscape architects and retired professors and business owners from Charlottesville, VA, have agreed to create a conceptual design for a new South Gateway Entrance Garden next to the Nature Center on a pro-bono basis. They are thoughtful designers with extensive experience with botanical gardens, native plants, and historical cultural sites. Thanks to Liz Sargent for engaging Warren and Sue and getting them excited about this project.

Warren, Sue, and Liz visited the site in early November and met with staff and several Committee members. Liz will be scheduling Zoom meetings throughout the planning process to discuss ideas and concepts.

The final conceptual phase should be completed by the summer of 2024. The conceptual design can then be used for fundraising efforts. A vendor will need to be retained to develop construction drawings.

4. Living Collections Policy Implementation

The BRAHMS management of natural history collections database, purchased in 2022 to document and manage the Botanical Gardens living collection, has proved to be challenging to set up. Kathy Mathews engaged a database expert in the WCU IT Department who arranged a Zoom tutorial with BRAHMS and is in the process of creating server space to house the database. Kathy has generously agreed to take on the installation of the fields needed for the living collection in early 2024. Consideration is being given to using a summer assistant to work on inputting data. BRAHMS can also be used in the future to house other natural history collections of the HBS. The collections data can be made available to researchers and the public.

5. Garden Volunteer Program

The HBS Horticulturist led the Wednesday morning volunteer activities this summer. Volunteers included some Committee members and other interested individuals recruited from HBS events. Jim Costa hosted an volunteer recognition event in late August to thank the Friends of the Garden volunteers.

6. Donation Policy

The Committee endorsed a draft Donation Policy developed by Lynda Anderson, Ken Conover and Bryding Adams. The HBS continues to receive requests from potential donors who wish to commemorate someone with a tree or other garden feature. Providing and communicating several options could increase the number of gifts received in support of the gardens. The Committee looks forward to a review of the draft policy by the BOD.

7. Non-native Invasive Plant Management

Control and eradication of several species of non-native invasive plants is an ongoing challenge. Special volunteer workdays have focused on manual removal. Garden assistants worked on manual removal this summer. The HBS Horticulturist has chemically-treated populations of species that cannot be manually eradicated. Achieving the goal of eliminating non-native invasive plants from the HBS campus will take continue concerted efforts including education of the Highlands community.

Based on research of 10 other sites
looking for consistency, and resonance
with our mission

Donation Policy
for the Highlands Botanical Gardens
(Internal Use Only)

prepared by
Lynda Anderson, Ken Conover, Bryding Adams
Draft January 20, 2023

The Highlands Biological Station (HBS) welcomes monetary contributions to support the HBS priorities including the Highlands Botanical Gardens. Contributions can be made to the Highlands Biological Station Advancement Fund at https://give.wcu.edu/hbs.

Contributions can be unrestricted to be utilized for HBS priorities at the discretion of the HBS Executive Director or restricted to support the Highlands Botanical Gardens including specific garden features, projects, or equipment.

Garden Projects and Equipment Donations

- Some may wish to help fund a project or a specific equipment need. These will be listed on the HBS website along with the donation amount needed.
- Examples include wayfinding project implementation, intern funding for plant recordkeeping, Epilog Laser engraver, leaf vacuum, stone step replacement, etc.

Dedicated Memorial Donations

Dedicated Memorial Donations can be made in honor or in memory of someone and will be recognized with a specific living or structural feature in the Gardens.

- **Mature Commemorative Tree**
  - The species and locations of mature trees available in the Gardens as a Mature Commemorative Tree will be listed on the HBS website.
  - Donations of $1,000 or more will be accepted for a Mature Commemorative Tree.
  - A plaque with a personal inscription and tree species will be placed near the tree for a period of 10 years.
  - The HBS cannot accept donations to plant a new tree in honor or memory of someone due to the lack of space in the Gardens.
- **Commemorative Garden Feature**
  - Donations of $1,000 or more will be accepted to support desired new garden features. [requests to be considered by HBS / Gardens & Grounds Comm.]
  - A plaque with a personal inscription will be placed near the garden feature for a period of 10 years.

  - Features available will be listed on the HBS website along with the donation amount needed.
  - Examples of garden features include replacing a pergola, funding an interpretive sign for Wayfinding implementation, replacing a bridge, etc.
- **Commemorative Bench**
  - Donations of $2,000 or more may be accepted, at the discretion of the HBS Executive Director, to dedicate an existing or new bench to those who have made significant contributions to the HBS.
  - A plaque with a personal inscription may be attached to the bench.
  - All inquiries about dedicated memorial benches will be directed to the HBS Executive Director.
  - Available commemorative benches will not be listed on the HBS website or communicated to the public at large because of the limited need for benches and the desire to reserve these commemorations for people with special connections to the HBS.

Tribute Donations

Tributes are monetary gifts made in honor or in memory of a special person or loved one.

- Donations of any amount will be accepted.
- Tribute gifts are unrestricted contributions to the Highlands Botanical Gardens.
- All gifts are final and cannot be allocated or pooled for a dedicated memorial at a later date.
- The HBS will send an acknowledgement of the gift to the living recipient, if desired by the donor.

Recognition

- Dedicated Memorial Donations will be recognized with a plaque on or near the specific living or structural feature in the Gardens, as described above.
- The names of all donors will be listed on the HBS website, unless the donor wishes to remain anonymous.
- The listing will be updated quarterly and include those who provide unrestricted funds, Garden Projects and Equipment Donations, Dedicated Memorial Donations, and Tribute Donations. The recipients of Dedicated Memorial and Tribute Donations will also be included.