Highlands Biological Station
Botanical Gardens & Grounds Planning and Advisory Committee
Update for HBS Board of Directors
October 27, 2024

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.

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

The HBS search committee has selected Tara Henderson to fill the Horticultural Specialist position that has been vacant since mid-June. Tara was a Botanical Garden Assistant at the HBS this past summer and excelled at maintaining gardens and trails, managing invasive plants, working with volunteers, and leading garden tours for the public. She is a recent graduate of Western Carolina University with a Bachelor of Science in Natural Resource Conservation and Management. I look forward to Tara joining the Committee after she assumes the position on November 1.

Hurricane Helene Impacts and Recovery
The Station received 20 inches of rain from Hurricane Helene over 48 hours on September 27th and 28th. Although the Cottages and gardens were damaged, the Station did not suffer the catastrophic damage endured by communities just 60 miles to the northeast.

- A large, more than 100 year old Pignut Hickory tree fell across the Homeowners Garden, landing in front of the Howell Cottage with a large limb puncturing the roof and damaging roof supports. Water also entered Howell Cottage, the kitchen, and the utility room.
- Repairs to the Homeowners Garden will be made after completion of the drainage project and repairs to the Howell Cottage.
- Trees also came down on the Coker Trail, Woodland Loop Trail, and into the lake.
- The bog was flooded and some sediment deposited.
- Garden volunteers (Committee members and others) helped the staff remove debris from downed trees and limbs.

Roadmap Implementation
During the past four months, the HBS and Committee continue to work on several key priorities.

1. Public Engagement

Garden Tours:

Botanical Garden tours were conducted by HBS staff, Committee members, and Botanical Garden Assistants every Wednesday at noon from June 5 to August 7. They were well-

attended by the public and many of our garden volunteers with 6 to 15 attendees each week.

2024 Native Plant Symposium:

The 2024 Native Plant Symposium held on September 13th and 14th was enjoyed by 80 participants. Over $15,000 was generated to support the Highlands Botanical Gardens. The next NPS is scheduled for September 11 and 12, 2026.

2. Wayfinding and Interpretative Signage

HBS/WCU awarded the contract to Signs Etc of Charlotte, NC to manufacture and install the wayfinding signs. Signs Etc staff were onsite this fall and have located and marked the location of each sign. Installation is expected to be completed before the end of the year.

3. South Gateway Entrance Garden

We are very appreciative of Warren Byrd and Sue Nelson, renowned landscape architects and retired professors and business owners from Charlottesville, VA, who presented to the Committee the final conceptual design for a new South Gateway Entrance Garden next to the Nature Center. The next step will be to identify funding to retain a landscape architect to develop construction documents and drawings. We hope to pursue this in the coming year.